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FIVE YEARS OF YOUTH.

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FIVE YEARS OF YOUTH;

OR,

SENSE AND SENTIMENT.

BY HARRIET MARTINEAU.

London :

PRINTED FOR HARVEY AND DARTON,
GRACECHURCH STREET.

1831.

PRINTED BY JOSEPH RICKERBY,
SHIRBOURN LANE.

P R E F A C E.

It is undoubtedly true, that, as a general rule, tales which are intended for the use of young persons, should contain delineations of character as formed by ordinary influences, and a picture of circumstances which are not uncommon. It is desirable, however, occasionally to represent the developement of virtues of every-day use, (and therefore of the highest value,) by peculiar influences, as well as the extraordinary beauties of character which may be made to grow out of the common experience of life; since there are always some who are remarkably placed, and,

alas! very many who appear to suppose that, in common circumstances, they may be content with a common character. It is possible that, in reading books like the following, not only motherless daughters may be interested by a narrative which comes home to their feelings; but that some who have mothers may be roused to such reflection, to such comparison of their own situation and character with those of others, as may be of no little benefit to their affections. Such, at least, is the effect of the comparison in actual life, of which it is the highest ambition of this little work to be a faithful transcript.

Norwich, 1830.

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FIVE YEARS OF YOUTH.

CHAPTER I.

The Sisters at Home.

NEAR the small town of A——, distant thirty miles from London, stood a farm-house, surrounded by a few acres of well-cultivated ground. There was a green before the door; and in the midst of the green stood an old elm, and under the elm was a pump. There was a sort of basin under the pump, and there were gathered together the goslings as soon as hatched, leaving the large pond in the farm-yard for the use of the ducks and ducklings, and the larger birds of their own race. There were hen-coops placed on the grass, which were furnished

with an abundant population; and there was a constant fluttering of wings about the pigeon-house, where the old ones of the flock would perch at one of the entrance holes, and glance up and down and around, perching their heads, and making their beautiful necks glitter in the sunshine with twenty different colours. At a little distance was a rookery, a scene of incessant activity, as the eyes and ears of all who were within hearing could testify. The farmer's children were generally in the farm-yard, seeing the cows milked, or playing duck-and-drake on the pond; and the boys followed the team with their father, or went into the field with old Robin, the hedger and ditcher, trying to help him with their little spades and wheelbarrow; while the girls fed the chickens, or stole into the dairy behind their mother.

It sometimes happened, that two little girls, who were evidently not of Farmer Rickham's family, were seen playing with the children on the green. From their dress alone, no one would have supposed them to be young ladies; but their manners and conversation proved them

to be, in some respects, well educated. All strangers who saw them looked again, wondering who could have the care of them, and what sort of management they had been subjected to. Their frocks, made sometimes of silk, and sometimes of calico, as it might happen, were generally torn, and always dirty; their shoes were all, from the sky-blue kid to the coarse black leather, down at the heel, so as to display a large round hole in the stocking. If Mary had a silk bonnet, and Anna a straw, the one was used as a cradle for the kitten, and the other as a basket to hold strawberries. Of course, all this inspired a stranger with disgust; but if occasion led him to speak to either sister, he was favourably impressed by the modesty of manner, and simplicity of speech, by which they were distinguished from many young persons more fortunate in their external appearance. They were the only children of Mr. Byerley, who lived at A——.

One fine May morning they went, as they often did, to see Nurse Rickham, as they called the farmer's wife. While Mary was looking for

eggs among the nettles, Anna amused herself with helping nurse to get dinner ready. When she came up from the potatoe hole with her apron full of potatoes, (for nurse had insisted on tying on an apron,) she stood in the middle of the kitchen for a minute or two, looking closely at Mrs. Rickham's gown. Mrs. Rickham turned round surprised.

“I never saw you in this gown before, nurse,” said Anna.

“’Tis a very old gown, Miss Anna; I’ve worn it this many a year.” And nurse coloured, and looked uncomfortable.

“I have seen it before, I am sure, nurse; though not on you; and yet I thought it had been blue. I don’t remember mamma in any thing green. Was it not mamma’s?”

“My dear, it was. But who could have thought of your remembering that, so many years as it was ago? I have always kept it out of your sister’s sight, because she, being older, might perhaps remember it; but to-day you took me by surprise with it on, and I persuaded myself there was no need to change it.”

“No need at all, nurse; but I should just like to see if Mary would know it again.”

When Mary was called in, she did not remember having ever seen the gown before.

“Well, how odd that is!” said Mrs. Rickham, “that Miss Anna should remember better than you do, when she was only three years old when my mistress died, and you were five.”

“Oh! but I remember many things that Anna cannot,” said Mary: “I remember my coming to stay here when papa and mamma went to London. How long ago is that, nurse?”

“Let me see: my mistress died seven years ago, and she went to London every year for three years before she died, and it was the first visit when you came to me, the year Miss Anna was born. My dear, you can’t possibly remember so long ago as ten years, when you could only just go alone.”

“Oh! but I do,” said Mary; “and it is just the trying to run about the green by myself that I remember. You had a wooden step at the door then; and I used to take fast hold of the door-post, and put down first one foot and then

the other; and when I could not reach the ground, I sat down on the step and slid, so that I fell softly on my hands and knees."

"Bless the child!" cried the nurse; "'tis all true; but what can make you remember it?"

"Ah! that I don't know; but I can tell you of some other things. Do you remember whether I cried the first night you put me to bed?"

"Yes, Miss, you did; for I said to my husband, that you had got into a bad habit with your new maid, of crying when you went to bed. However, it was only for that night, I think."

"It was because the bed creaked, and frightened me; and the feel of the coarse sheets was not like what I had been accustomed to. And that old elm too, how its rough bark hurt my little hands when I used to try to get round it."

"Well, I will never say again that children can't remember back to two years old," said nurse.

"I think I could not have been older than that when I cut off the fingers of Miss Oliver's gloves," said Anna. "Do you remember that, Mary?"

Mary laughed heartily at the recollection.

“What a little rogue you looked, Anna, peeping from under the table between the folds of the cloth; while Miss Oliver was so busy talking to mamma about the patterns, and unrolling and drawing on her gloves in an absent fit! And poor mamma tried to look grave, and could not, when the fingers’ ends came through.”

“Miss Anna was always the child for fun,” said nurse.

“There was as much fright as fun in that joke, however,” said Anna. “When I had done my cutting, I could not roll up the gloves again for a long time; and I felt so sure of being punished, that I heartily wished the finger tips on again. I shall never forget how glad I was to see mamma laugh.”

Mrs. Rickham turned away and sighed, and Mary and Anna looked at one another with sadness in their faces.

“I know, nurse,” said Mary, “that you do not like to hear us talk in this way about mamma. But only consider how very little we remember of her, and how trifling that little is.

We only talk about it because we would not forget even this much."

"It is all very natural, my dears; but when I think about her, as I do every day, and when I see how like her you are, Miss Anna especially, I can't help grieving when I think how much more chance there would be of your growing up to be like her, if you could remember for yourselves what she was."

Here nurse Rickham stood and looked at the young ladies from head to foot, and began to smooth down their rough hair with her hand. They knew well enough what would come next to be anxious to make their escape; so, to avoid a lecture on tidiness, one ran to help little Tommy to pump, and the other to gather some flowers for papa.

Mary had not finished gathering her flowers when the farmer came in to dinner; and when Tommy was called away from the pump to eat his dumpling, Anna thought it time to set about the recovery of her bonnet, which hung, out of reach, from the branches of the elm. When she had used stick, rake, and pole to no pur-

pose, she climbed the tree far enough to be able to shake the bough on which the bonnet hung, and from which it presently fell into the pool. In her haste down to snatch it out of the water before it should be wet through, she tore her frock-skirt almost from top to bottom.

“ Mary! Mary!” cried she, running to the garden, with her dripping hat in one hand, and the terrible rent gathered up in the other, “ can you give me some pins to make my frock tidy till we get home?”

“ Tidy!” said Mary, laughing: “ nurse will think it an odd sort of tidiness; but let us see what we can do.”

“ Please to wipe my bonnet then, while I pin up this great hole, and then let us go home directly.”

When they went to bid nurse good bye, she begged them to wait a few minutes, if they could, as she wished to walk to the town with them as soon as her husband should have dined. This delay gave Anna an opportunity of hanging up her bonnet and handkerchief to dry in the sun; so she stuck them on a bush, and amused her-

self with watching the bees till nurse was ready.

It appeared that her errand was to their father's house, and her business with the young ladies' maid, whom she blamed for allowing them to appear as they had come to the farm that morning. Every body in Mr. Byerley's house knew that Nurse Rickham was privileged to say and do what she pleased when the young ladies were in question, and that she was as capable as any body about them of deciding what it was proper for them to be, and to do, and to wear. The maid therefore only justified herself by saying, that the young ladies were more troublesome about their things than any children she ever had to wait upon, pleasant and good as they were in other matters; and that she thought they were really too old to need to have a servant to tell them always what to put on; though, to be sure, it made a great difference their having no mother to teach them such things. Nobody knew, she said, how anxious she was to do what was proper for them; and as a proof, she would beg Mrs. Rickham's opinion about

some purchases she was going to make for them.

It always grieved Mrs. Rickham that Mr. Byerley should have resisted the advice of all his friends in so important a point as the domestic education of his children. He was known to have so strong a prejudice against schools, that no one thought of persuading him to place his daughters in one. Besides, his health was infirm, and his spirits variable, so that it would have been too hard upon him to have relinquished the society which alone could make his home cheerful to him. It appeared to all sensible people, that the best plan would have been to have invited some respectable elderly lady to take up her abode with his daughters, and supply, as far as might be, that guidance which the best of fathers cannot afford. To this plan, however, as often as proposed, he refused to listen, declaring his determination to educate his daughters himself, independently of all assistance but that of masters for accomplishments.

For such a task he was well qualified by high principle and extensive information, and by his full appreciation of what is valuable and beauti-

ful in female character; but he had some eccentricities which were likely to impair the effects of his most earnest and judicious endeavours. He was also much engaged in public life, and had therefore less command of his time than was desirable on account of his children, who were allowed to dispose of their leisure more freely in his absence than was at all consistent with those habits of regular industry, which, at their ages, (ten and twelve,) ought to have been formed and confirmed. A great deal was accomplished by means of the close application to which they were accustomed while pursuing their studies in his presence; but much valuable time was wasted by bad management in his absence.

Dinner waited long this day, as was often the case: Mr. Byerley was engaged in his study with a gentleman, whom he was assisting to draw up resolutions for a public meeting. When he entered the dining-room, he saw his girls sitting close together, reading out of the same book so intently, that they did not hear him approach. Standing behind them, and looking over their heads, he read aloud,

“ ‘ No fear lest dinner cool.’ ”

Aye, that was a dinner in Eden—a dinner very unlike ours, which is probably cold by this time. Come, come, 'tis very late."

The girls, who had started and closed the book hastily at the sound of his voice, ran to take their places at the table.

Mary remarked that her papa had not been out, if she might guess by his gown and slippers being still on, as at breakfast. Anna supposed that it was because he wore his slippers that he had startled them, though they had been watching for him just before.

"Mary," said Mr. Byerley, "what made you shut your book in such a hurry when I put my head in between you?"

"I hardly know," said Mary; "but I believe I was not quite sure whether you wished us to read *Paradise Lost* yet."

"You might have known in a moment by asking."

"Yes; but Mr. Wilkins was with you, and I knew you were busy; and the book was lying open, and we did not mean to read on, only we could not help it."

“It has done you no harm, I dare say, my dears; and if it had, it would have been my fault for leaving such a book in your way. Would you like to see more of it?”

“I like the little I read, papa; but I do not know how I should like the whole.”

“The whole! I should be sorry to be obliged to read all that,” said Anna. “I like the Arguments best. Why are they called the ‘Arguments, papa?’”

“Because, by *Argument*, is properly meant a subject of thought. The Argument of a poem is the subject, the story; and in *Paradise Lost*, and most long poems, it is given in prose, like a table of contents.”

“I like getting at the story at once, instead of fishing it out from the poetry.”

“If the story is all you care about, you are very right,” said her father; “but the story is the last thing people of taste think about in a fine poem.”

“Then Mary is a person of taste, I suppose; for she was in a great hurry to get to the grave part.”

“ If she likes the grave part, she may go to it again,” said Mr. Byerley. “ She would not like it if she did not understand it; and the more she understands and relishes it, the more likely she is to become a woman of taste. But I have another *argument* to propose to you both. Did you ever hear me speak of Mrs. Fletcher of Southampton?”

“ Yes, papa: you showed us a letter of her's once: you remember it, Anna.”

“ About her little girl that died? O yes, I remember that letter, and I want to see it again.”

“ You shall, my dear; and you will soon see Mrs. Fletcher too. She is coming to stay with us for a few days.”

“ Any body with her, papa?”

“ Yes, her husband, of course; and perhaps two of her daughters. They come on Wednesday; so you must consult Mrs. Rickham how you are to make room for them all, and I am sure you will try to make their visit pleasant.”

Mary and Anna were troubled with no fears on the subject, for they were accustomed to receive their father's friends, and had never been

conscious of any awkwardness in doing so. If they had now any doubts, it was about the pleasure they might have in the Miss Fletchers' society ; for they had never had any companions of their own age, or any playmates except the farmer's children.

When their father called them into his study to repeat the lessons which had been omitted in the morning, Anna stretched herself and yawned, preparatory to collecting her books and exercises.

“ What, Anna ! yawning at the very idea of being employed ! Better wait till you are tired, surely.”

“ I can stretch again then, papa. I wonder whether you ever do. I never saw you ; but I suppose you are tired sometimes, like other people.”

“ Very tired, my dear ; and never more so than when you are rattling nonsense, instead of opening your books. There is a time for all things.”

It was now Anna's time for looking grave ; and she read her page of Virgil as steadily as if she had been ten years older. Nothing was heard in

the study for the next two hours, but the single voice of the reader, and the scratching pen of the writer. When the last school-book was closed, the girls looked at their father. He pointed to the book-case, where the large Bible was placed ; and while Mary took it down, Anna drew a seat to each side of her father's large study-chair. They read and talked, and read again, till the servant came to say that tea had been ready some time. Anna forgot her intention of yawning again. They never remembered having been weary of reading the Bible with their father ; for he made them understand it clearly, as far as they went : he talked and encouraged them to talk freely on the thousand subjects which made religion interesting ; and his voice was never so soft, or his manner so tender, as at those times.

After tea, Mary, who saw that her father was troubled with headache, as was often the case, pointed to the field, where the evening shadows were lengthening in the golden light of the setting sun, and asked him if a walk would not do him good. He was too tired to go out, he said ;

but he should like some music, which generally refreshed him more than any thing. So he established himself on the sofa ; and Mary, who played very well, opened her piano, and amused him till it was quite dark. Before he dismissed his children for the night, he called Anna to sit on the low stool beside him.

“ Our days fly away fast, Anna ; do not they ? ”

“ Yes, papa ; but not so fast as I should like. I want to be older, that I may have more of my own way.”

“ You unreasonable child ! People tell me I let you run wild already. What more do you want ? ”

“ I want to take journeys, and to leave off learning some things that are tiresome, and to learn others that must be very entertaining ; and I want to send Farmer Rickham’s children to school, and to build an hospital here, and several other things. What a will I would make, if I was a woman ! ”

“ If you had any thing to leave, I suppose you mean,” said her father, laughing. “ But,

seriously, my dear, don't you think it as well that people should be taught to do no harm before they form grand schemes for doing good ; and that they should learn to do good in a small way, before they form plans too large for them to manage?"

" Like Sally Benson and her bird."

" What was that ?"

" She thought she should like to help her brother's birds in building their nests ; (you know he has three pairs, in a very large cage ;) so she got them some moss that she thought better than what he had provided, and she went a great distance to get it ; and she was a long time searching for a plant that she was told they would like to eat ; and she watched and watched them, and was very busy trying to make them build. But O, papa!"

" Well, what happened ?"

" Why, she frightened them so with putting her fingers between the wires, that they would not make their nests properly ; and she had got the wrong plant after all, and one of them died from eating it. And what was far worse, she forgot,

all the time, to feed her own canary ; and she found it dead at the bottom of the cage one day."

"Aye, that is the way with young minds till they get experience ; and I am afraid it would be the way with you, if you had more of your own will, as you say."

"Why, papa, what harm do you think I should do ?"

"Consider whether you do none already. Have you done nothing on this one day that can be hurtful to anybody ? You need not tell me, if you find you have ; but satisfy yourself—that's all."

"I will tell you, however, papa. I ran away when nurse was going to say something I did not wish to hear. I saw she looked vexed, and I am afraid little Kitty saw it too ; and perhaps I have put it into her head to do the same."

"You must put a better behaviour into her head as soon as you can, then. Now try and recollect if you have done any good to-day."

Anna thought some time, and looked sad when she owned she could recollect nothing.

“ I am afraid you are hardly fit for building an hospital yet, Anna,” said Mr. Byerley. “ However, to comfort you, I can assure you that you have done me some good to-day.”

“ You mean, by making you forget your headache. But that was accident, so it does not suit what we were talking about ; but I will try to make it better another time, for fear you should be the first person to go into my hospital, when I build it.”

Mr. Byerley smiled as he kissed her and sent her to bed.

CHAPTER II.

Preparation.

THE next morning, Mr. Byerley, who was a bad sleeper, was wakened very early by the murmur of voices from the next room, which was occupied by his daughters. Though the partition between the chambers was very slight, he was not usually disturbed by noise ; for the girls were asleep before he retired to rest, and he arose as early as they in the morning. Now, however, he heard the never-ceasing sound of low tones from four o'clock till six ; but not a single word could he distinguish of all that was said. The girls could not be learning lessons, for it was Sunday morning ; and, as he heard no tread, he thought they could not have left their beds. They were evidently stirring,

however, as soon as he had rung his bell ; and from behind his blind he saw them afterwards in the garden, not running or gathering flowers, as usual, but in earnest consultation. They stood before a certain balcony, looking at it from all sides, and presently from all distances ; for Mary would have walked backwards into the fish-pond, if her sister had not caught hold of her. Then, with each a bough, they attempted to disperse the chickweed which had overspread the pond ; and then they repaired to the harbour where the honeysuckle trailed on the ground, and a film of gossamer overspread the entrance. When they met their father at breakfast, they looked heated and exhausted. He told them there was no occasion to toil so hard, as he should give direction to John, the gardener, to put the garden and court in good order before the arrival of their expected guests. Part of their weighty business was taken off the girls' hands, but apparently no great deal ; for they were found, more than once that day, in the little parlour which opened upon the balcony, as eager in consultation as they had been before breakfast. This parlour was so

small that it might almost have been called a closet ; but the balcony was larger than the room, and communicated so easily with it, by means of a French window, that the deficiency of size was a small objection. The parlour would just contain Mr. Byerley, his daughters, and a tea-table ; and when they had guests with them, the balcony held the visitors and their host, and the green parlour the young tea-maker and her apparatus. It was a favourite place, the view from it being particularly pretty, and its retirement complete. The simple ornaments of the dwelling were all collected there ; Mary's harp-lute, Anna's flower-stands, and the precious picture of their mother. The room was so darkened by the colour of its furniture, by the roof of the balcony, and the creepers which hung thickly about it, that the picture conveyed no very distinct impression to strangers. Mr. Byerley, however, liked it better in this obscurity than in a fuller light : the girls had long been too familiar with its features not to feel as if they had been equally familiar with the original.

While they were drinking tea in this place

on the Sunday evening of which I speak, Mr. Byerley told the girls that he was going, in the morning, to London, to attend a public meeting, and that he should not return till the Tuesday night, or perhaps the Wednesday morning; but that he would take care to be at home when their guests arrived. Mary asked what should be done for their entertainment; for she thought the house must be very dull to strangers. Her father thought not, as their friends came to see and talk with friends, and not to see sights and be entertained as they might be in the house of any stranger. Mary knew her father's dislike of bustle, and of any interruption of his daily plans which was not caused by public business; but she felt quite sure that Mr. and Mrs. Fletcher and their daughters would enjoy seeing more of the pretty country near, than could be brought within the limits of a walk; and she therefore pressed the point. "You shall have no trouble, papa, but just to get on your horse and go with us."

"Where, my dear? I will go to the world's end if you show me that it will do any good; but you know I dislike frolicking."

“It will do a great deal of good to make Mrs. Fletcher admire Audley bridge and the castle; and you need not call it frolicking, but only a morning’s ride.”

“A morning’s ride stretched out till near midnight! Think of the distance, my dear.”

“Suppose it should be past midnight,” said Anna; “it would still be a morning’s ride.”

“We will be home as early as you please, papa, if we can but set out early enough; and we have planned it all so completely——.”

“Well, well; don’t talk to me any more about it, but settle it all your own way. I have no time for such nonsense.” So saying, Mr. Byerley took out of his pocket his list of resolutions for the public meeting, and began to read very attentively. He soon seemed sorry, however, for his hastiness; for he folded up his paper, drew his girls to him, and put an arm round each of them as they stood.

“I hope, my dears,” said he, “that your heads have not been quite full of these little plans all this day.”

“No, papa, not quite full; not at church-

time, nor while Tommy Rickham was saying his lessons ; but yet——.”

“ Are you quite sure what you were thinking of when Tommy was reading ?” asked Anna.

“ Did you make no mistake that you remember ?”

“ Mistake ! What mistake ?”

“ When he was reading about little Will’s giving all he had to the old beggar, he stopped at the word *penny*, and you told him it was *pony* : the little fellow stared, and I dare say he wondered how little Will could toss his pony into the old man’s hat.”

“ I must have been thinking of the pony you are to ride ; but you should have told me.”

“ I set it right with Tommy afterwards ; but I did not want to make Kitty laugh, so I let it pass at the time.”

“ Then, papa,” said Mary, “ I am afraid I can’t answer for not having had any silly thoughts about this at church.”

“ It is always wisest not to answer for any such thing, Mary ; for the wisest and best of us are troubled with vain thoughts at the most solemn times, and in the most sacred employments.”

“The very wisest and best, papa?” said Mary, looking at her mother’s picture.

“Your mother used to say so,” said Mr. Byerley, as his eyes followed Mary’s and rested on the picture. “If ever there was an example of entire self-command, it was she; and if ever there was one who fully understood and felt the blessings of this day, it was she: and yet she used to make the same complaint that we have made.”

“I remember,” said Mary, in a low voice, “that I thought she looked differently on a Sunday from every other day; and I felt differently. The feeling comes over me now, of those bright summer mornings when I used to be taken up earlier than on week-days; and the washing, and the clean frock and pinafore, and mamma making breakfast, in her neat white gown. And then, after breakfast, she used to take me into the garden, and let me gather a flower for her. I don’t know what makes me remember crocusses so particularly; but I never see a gay crocus-bed without thinking of one of those bright old Sunday mornings.”

“She loved to make you particularly happy on Sundays, because she thought the feeling of pleasure might last through life, as it did with her. Her parents made her love the Sabbath, and the power of the feeling was once shown very remarkably——.”

He stopped, but the girls looked at him so earnestly that he soon went on.

“You know, though you cannot remember, that you once had a little brother : nurse often tells you about him, I know, and how he died. Nothing could be more sudden than the accident, and, of course, neither your mother nor any body else could be at all prepared for such a shock ; for a heartier child could not be. It happened on a Friday afternoon, and all that night and the next day the struggle which your mother underwent was fearful. Early on the Sunday morning, she slept for the first time since the accident, and I would not have her wakened when it was broad day. She started up, at last, with the confused feeling of something very dreadful having happened ; but when the tide of grief was just flowing in upon her

again, the church-bells rang out. She was calm instantly ; and that day did more towards restoring the tone of her mind, than any previous exertion, though she had striven hard for composure. She walked in the garden with me, and sat by this very window, sometimes reading, and sometimes listening to the chimes ; but looking so like herself that I was no longer anxious about her.”

“ She was ill then, nurse says.”

“ Yes ; her strength had declined very much, and that was the reason why I was so uneasy about her. While she was in health, she was the one to give, not to need, support ; and, to the last, the strength of her mind never failed.”

“ Nurse told us once what mamma said the day before she died, about us, and about every body who depended on her for any thing.”

“ I gave nurse leave to repeat it to you when she thought you could understand and feel it properly ; and I am glad she has, because Mrs. Fletcher can tell you much more which you are now prepared to hear. She will tell you how your mother and she used to study together ;

perhaps she will show you the bible, marked by themselves for their own use."

"I have often wanted to know," said Mary, "what parts my mother was most fond of, and read the oftenest; but I never asked you, because I thought you would tell me when the right time came."

"It is the right time now," said her father, kissing them both; "bring the bible from below, and we will read a portion to which she used to turn perpetually when she was in any trouble."

The next morning, the girls were ready dressed to make breakfast early for their father, that he might be in time for the coach to London. But anxious as they were to make him comfortable on all occasions, they did not understand the way, and knew nothing about the many little niceties on which domestic comfort depends. How should they, when there was nobody but servants to teach them? They were very quick of observation, and if their father had allowed

them to visit his friends, and to see what was done in other houses, their wish to learn, and their affection for him, would have enabled them to improve their domestic notions and habits; but Mr. Byerley was, as we have said, sadly prejudiced in some respects; and he would allow of no intercourse between his daughters and any of their neighbours. The neighbours thought it very odd, of coursé. Mr. Wilkins was wont to shake his head when he told his wife how poor Byerley's children were being spoiled for life by being so shut up as they were; and Miss Pratt, their opposite neighbour, was much scandalized at their method of romping with Nurse Rickham's children; and the young Grants, who, to the number of eight, were boating, riding, and driving every day and all day long, supposed that the poor Miss Byerley's were intended to be very learned, as they could read Latin, it was understood, and had been seen, one day when the blind was open, poring over a globe. It did not, of course, signify what such neighbours as these thought of Mr. Byerley's method of education; but there were two or three families of a better

class as to sense and merit, with whom the girls might have associated with great advantage to themselves; and the very commonest circumstances which take place in a tolerably well-regulated family would have conveyed much instruction to these motherless children, which could in no other way be supplied. Mrs. Rickham had taught them to sew, and that well; but about the management of the kitchen and larder she knew little, and next to nothing of the customs of the parlour. Their father often sighed when he contrasted the appearance and manners of his children at table, with what they would have been if their mother had lived; and sometimes he sent them to smooth their hair or change their frocks before he would sit down with them; but it was beyond his power to establish regular habits of neatness and method, and he trusted that this would be done by their own observation and care when they should, at length, see something of the world. He found that the servants grew more and more awkward and remiss from the inability of the young ladies to direct them steadily and with propriety, as children as young as them-

selves are able to do when well taught. He was partly to blame himself, for his habits were, in some respects, eccentric.

On this morning, he called from his chamber-door to desire the servant to run and take his place in the coach. This ought to have been done on the Saturday ; and the maid was obliged to leave the fire, which had been badly lighted, and could not be coaxed into a blaze. Mary saw that the kettle would not boil in time unless she took the bellows, while the cook dusted the parlour-furniture, and Anna brought up the bread and the eggs and the butter from the larder. When their father came down, he looked displeased to see them so employed, and wondered why, with two servants in the house, breakfast could not be prepared without so much confusion. After all, the kettle would not quite boil, so the tea was not fit to be drunk, nor the egg to be eaten ; and there had been so much delay, that the horn sounded at the end of the street before Mr. Byerley had half finished breakfast. He stuffed his papers into his pockets ; pulled on the boots for which he had waited till the last mo-

ment, and which were only half cleaned after all; pushed aside the umbrella which Anna offered him, with "Pshaw, child! where's the ring? I can't carry it unfastened in that manner;" kissed his daughters hastily, and ran off just in time to overtake the coach, which had been driven on in disregard of the maid's protestations that her master was coming.

When she came back, she sat down to make a comfortable cup of tea for herself and the cook, while the young ladies finished the cool beverage in the parlour. They were not long in doing so; for they were eager about the schemes which were next to be undertaken. They heard John, the gardener, whetting his scythe; so they went first to see how the garden could be beautified. When they had ranged the walks with John, shaken their heads over the weedy pond, got their shoes thoroughly wet in the dewy, new-mown grass, and then thoroughly soiled on the flower-beds, they came in again, and mounted to the lumber-garret, leaving in the housemaid's eyes very strong evidence where they had gone. She followed them with dry shoes, and found

them trying to bring down, from a high shelf, a looking-glass which was placed with its face to the wall.

“ Stop, Miss Mary,” cried the maid ; “ you will be down, and the glass after you. Let me reach it, or whatever else you want.”

“ We want only the glass, thank you. There, down it comes, safe. But, O dear, what a tarnished, battered old frame it has !”

“ You can never use that glass, Miss Mary. It cannot have been used these fifty years.”

“ Not quite,” said Mary ; “ for I remember nurse’s dandling Anna before it. But I had no idea it was so shabby. Let us take it down and dust it, however : it may look better then.”

Just as they reached the head of the stairs, the maid holding one end, and the girls the other, the part of the frame which they held gave way, and it was a wonder the glass was not broken.

“ I had like to have fallen down stairs, glass and all,” exclaimed the maid. “ Here’s an end of the matter, young ladies ; so let us put it where we found it.”

No: Mary thought it would answer their purpose better than ever now ; so she pulled off the rest of the frame, which split with a touch. She desired the maid to rub up the glass, while she and Anna went back into the lumber-room to find some paper, the same as the hangings of the green parlour. This they found ; and when they had called John in to nail up the glass in the little room, opposite the balcony, and sufficiently low to reflect the landscape beyond, and sent down into the kitchen for some paste, they began to cut out the trailing pattern of the paper, and so fixed it on the edge of the glass as to make a very pretty border, and one more corresponding with the rest of the furniture than a gilt frame would have been. Even the maid admired what she thought, at first, a mere fancy ; and the girls saw their own faces oftener that day than on any preceding day of their lives. Mary thought that one ornament more was wanted to make all complete : she asked Anna if a white cast of some sort—a vase or a bust—would not look very well in the corner where the harp-lute rested. Anna agreed, and inclined for a vase, which they

might fill with flowers. Mary thought the head of a poet or a musician would be more suitable. Who should it be? The only musician she remembered to have seen on the Italian's board was Handel; and Handel was sadly fat and ugly. She did not know who it could be but Milton; and that face, beautiful as it was, was known to every body by this time. It reminded her, however, that she might perhaps get some hints about ornamenting their bower from "Paradise Lost;" for she liked what she had read of Eve's preparation of a repast for the angel. So, while Anna ran to the window to watch for the Italian with his image-board, who was sure to pass, Mary settled herself in the balcony to read about Paradise.

As soon as she was fairly lost to all outward things, and present only with Adam and Eve, seeing how

" raised of grassy turf

Their table was, and mossy seats had round,"

she was roused by somebody standing before

her. It was Mrs. Rickham, who came to ask something about clean sheets for the best bed.

“Clean sheets!” exclaimed Mary. “Oh, ask Anna to give Susan the keys, and then you can find what you want.”

“Very well, Miss. But there wants a new ewer and basin for the room the young ladies are to have; and I doubt if there are towels enough.”

“We will see about that to-morrow, nurse. I must make this room complete now I am about it.”

“Perhaps that will do as well to-morrow, Miss Mary, if indeed it wants any thing more; but the first thing to be done is to make the sleeping-rooms comfortable, and to see what condition your frocks are in, Miss.”

This was too true to be denied; so Mary left her book in the balcony till her provision for the comforts of her guests should leave her at leisure to plan luxuries for them.

There was time, however, for all; and the manifold luxuries of an excursion in search of the picturesque were duly cared for. The fowls,

the cakes, the wine, the sketch-books, the telescope, were appointed and hunted up ; and Anna put on her habit and went to the farm, to try the grey pony which the farmer was to lend her. The pony carried her round the twelve-acre field, and up the green lane, and down the mill-lane, with the utmost propriety, and promised to be a great ornament to the cavalcade.

On Tuesday night the girls sat up for their father till the last coach had passed through the town at eleven o'clock. They were a little disappointed at not seeing him, but had no doubt of his arrival before noon the next day.

CHAPTER III.

Arrivals.

“ HERE comes papa !” cried Anna, as she rose from the breakfast-table, “ and a gentleman with him ! Can it be Mr. Fletcher already ?”

“ O, no !” said Mary ; “ how should it be, without Mrs. Fletcher and their daughters ? He is coming in, however. I do hope it is not a political person. I had rather hear any thing than politics from London people.”

Anna agreed that they had quite enough of politics every day of their lives, without hearing more from strangers. When their new guest entered the room, Mr. Byerley introduced him to his daughters as Signor Casimiro Elvi. He did not at all answer to Mary and Anna’s notions of a politician, as they assured one another

by a glance of congratulation. If he had been twenty-five years younger, he might have been taken for a poet ; and though he was too old for that, he might well be supposed a great man of some kind or other ; for he had a profusion of black hair, curling back from his prominent forehead in a manner which is uncommon among Englishmen. His countenance was bright with intelligence, but mild, and sometimes deeply melancholy. The girls answered his greetings, which were those of a foreigner, with much respect ; and while they prepared a fresh breakfast, wondered what topics of conversation would succeed the usual hopes and fears about fatigue, and invitations to eat and drink.

“ As we were saying, sir,” observed their father at length, “ if we cannot induce the minister to regard public opinion when it is so plainly expressed as in this case, what is to be done but to petition, and petition again, till the House forces the matter upon his attention ? ”

To the great disappointment of the girls, the Italian gentleman listened, not only with politeness, but with eager interest, and replied with

such animated volubility, as to leave no doubt of his being a politician after all. They could not make out much of what he said, though they understood French very well; but his rapid utterance did not prevent their discovering that he spoke of the ruin of his own country as owing to the obstinate disregard which a despotic government had shown to the interests of the people, and the establishment at length of a military government, to the destruction of all freedom and peace. Anna was soon tired of stretching her attention to listen to what did not interest her to hear, and she therefore slipped out of the room. Mary was obliged to remain, to pour out the tea; and presently, as soon as there was a sufficient pause, Signor Elvi addressed her in French, which it appeared he always spoke, though he understood English pretty well. Mary liked all he said; and he gave so entertaining an account of his late perilous journey across the continent, that she was quite sorry when her father refused a fourth cup of tea, and it became necessary to offer to the Signor the refreshment of his own apartment.

She ran to find her sister, and relate all that she had heard. The story was interspersed with many remarks on Signor Elvi, and many conjectures respecting his rank and circumstances, which excited Anna's active imagination to an unusual degree; and by the time Mr. Fletcher's carriage drove up to the door, her mind was so occupied with the adventures of the Italian gentleman, that she could think of nothing else.

Mary looked anxiously to see if there were any young faces in the carriage. That the Miss Fletcher's were there, there was evidence in the straw bonnets and pink ribbons which appeared when the glass was let down; and the young ladies had no sooner alighted, than Mary and Anna had decided that they might become very charming companions, and perhaps friends for life. Even Mr. Byerley wished that the appearance of his daughters was equally prepossessing, both as to countenance and dress.

Mr. Fletcher was as remarkably decided in manner and abrupt in speech, as his lady was soft and mild. It seemed as if he was somewhat out of patience with the tone of sentiment which

distinguished his wife's conversation, and had therefore run into the other extreme. His daughters, who much resembled their mother, stood so much in awe of him, that they spoke as little as possible in his presence, so that he probably knew much less about what was in their minds than many comparative strangers; but he concluded them to be weak and romantic, as he was pleased to say women in general were; and by thus concluding, he adopted the most likely method of rendering them so. The Byerleys, of course, knew nothing of all this; and as they were in the habit of opening their minds freely to their father, they were very slow in making the discovery that a similar degree of confidence did not prevail in all families.

Soon after their arrival, Anna was sitting near Mr. Fletcher and his daughter Selina, who appeared about her own age. Amidst the many enquiries which she made of Selina about the journey and other subjects of discourse, she looked perpetually to the door, in hopes that Signor Elvi would enter. When there had been a short pause, she said: "There is such an in-

teresting gentleman here now! I am glad you will see him, and hear his adventures."

"Adventures!" said Selina: "oh! what adventures?"

"Oh! so interesting! He had to fly for his life, and to put on a disguise; and he has been shipwrecked."

"Delightful! Did he tell you about it himself?"

"He told my father and sister when I was out of the room; but I dare say my father will draw him out again; and we must take care to be in the way."

"Certainly; one would not miss such an opportunity for the world. But what is his name, and where does he come from?"

"His name is Casimiro Elvi, and he comes from Italy."

"From Italy! the very country one would guess, to be sure."

"Pray, why?" asked Mr. Fletcher, who had overheard the whole. "Does nobody put on a disguise, is nobody shipwrecked, that does not come from Italy?"

Selina made no attempt at an answer, which surprised Anna, who said, she supposed Selina meant that the refugees, of whose misfortunes we hear so much, were generally from Italy; and that she therefore concluded Signor Elvi to be an Italian.

“Find out what she means if you can,” said Mr. Fletcher, as he turned his back upon them both.

“Tell me the rest when we go to take off our bonnets,” said Selina, in a whisper.

“Let us go now then,” said Anna, “unless you would like some more cake first.”

Selina refused the cake, and they moved towards the door; but as Anna put her hand on the lock, Signor Elvi entered. The girls delayed a moment to see how gracefully he paid his respects to the strangers, and then looking at one another for consent, they returned to their seats.

“Does Mr. Fletcher understand French?” enquired Anna, at the end of half an hour, during which every body had conversed with the stranger but Mr. Fletcher.

“ Yes,” replied Selina; “ but my father does not like foreigners generally. There is an Italian gentleman in our neighbourhood, who brought letters of introduction to my father; but we can only ask him when papa is out, or when we have company, because papa never speaks to him.”

“ What can be his reason?” asked Anna.

Selina shook her head, and Anna sat in a reverie, till she saw the ladies about to leave the room. She was made very uneasy by what she had seen and heard. She was sure that there must be something wrong, to occasion so strange a want of sympathy among members of the same family; and she began to be afraid that she might not like Selina so well as she at first thought she should. She hoped that their guests would wish to be left to themselves when they entered their own apartments, that she might consult Mary, and learn the result of her observations. But the Miss Fletchers said, “ Don’t go;” and Mary seemed quite inclined to stay, having ascertained that Mrs. Fletcher’s maid was in attendance on her mistress.

Dressing went on slowly; for there were frequent and long pauses, during which Selina stood with the comb suspended, and her sister Rose with the key unturned in the lock of her trunk, while they talked of many things. When they descended to the drawing-room, Anna wondered whether the same restraint was to be imposed by Mrs. Fletcher's presence as by her husband's. To her great relief, the girls showed at once that they had no reserves with their mother. They made her rest on the sofa, as she was in delicate health, and somewhat tired with her journey. The four girls then gathered round her, and held what Anna thought the most delightful conversation she had almost ever enjoyed. She was quite sorry when dinner-time approached, and the gentlemen dropped in, one by one, and engaged Mrs. Fletcher's attention.

When Selina and Anna walked in to dinner behind the rest of the party, they lamented that they could not sit together. At the bottom of the table they exchanged a squeeze of the hand at parting, and took their places on each side of Mr. Byerley, preparing to keep up an inter-

course of glances if any thing interesting should be said about Italy.

Italy was not once mentioned while the ladies were at table ; but Signor Elvi was not therefore silent. He talked on almost every subject which was introduced; sometimes seeking, and sometimes communicating information. His observations on the effects which followed the repeal of the silk duties of England on the trade of Lyons, interested even Mr. Fletcher; and he also explained, entirely to that gentleman's satisfaction, a new method of draining marshes, which he had seen practised abroad. All this a little disappointed Anna, who had rather have seen him sit abstracted, unless patriotism and misfortune were talked about.

In the course of the evening, Mary found an opportunity of learning from her father a few particulars about the stranger. Mr. Byerley only knew that he had left a wife and large family in his own country; that he had filled a very high political station ; and that, by his exertions in that station in the cause of liberty, he was rendered peculiarly obnoxious to the

usurping government. Sentence of death for high treason had been issued against him, and he had not the remotest prospect of being able to return to his own land, and to all that was dear to him there.

The party broke up at an early hour, as the travellers were somewhat fatigued, and as great exertions were to be made the next day. The horses and carriage were to be at the door at eight o'clock; for much was to be seen at Audley Bridge, and no day was ever long enough, as every body knows, to fulfil all the purposes of such an expedition.

When Rose Fletcher had been asked whether she preferred riding, or a place in the carriage, she at once declared that she liked riding above every thing; but that her habit was at the bottom of the large trunk, which had gone on to London. This was not allowed to be a difficulty, as Mary's habit was found to fit her sufficiently well to serve for the occasion. Rose and Anna were therefore to ride with Mr. Byerley and either Mr. Fletcher or Signor Elvi, as those gentlemen should determine between themselves.

“ Well, Mary,” said Anna, as she shut the door of her chamber.

“ Well, Anna,” said her sister, as she put down the candle on the dressing-table.

“ What a pleasant day we have had!” exclaimed the one.

“ How unlike one another people are, to be sure!” observed the other.

“ Mr. Fletcher and the Signor, for instance. I can’t endure Mr. Fletcher.”

“ Why not?” said Mary, surprised: “ he is silent sometimes, certainly; but when he does talk, he says such very clever things, that they are worth waiting for. Do you know, I am not sure but that I like him better than Mrs. Fletcher.”

“ Oh, Mary ! impossible ! She is such a dear, kind lady; and he is so cross, I dare not speak to him.”

“ Indeed !” said Mary ; “ then you must have heard or seen something that I did not.”

“ Nay, Mary; I heard him tell you that he gave it in charge to you to cure Selina of her way of speaking.”

“ I do not think he was cross when he said that. It was rather odd, perhaps, so short as our acquaintance is; but Selina really does whine very much; and strangers are more aware of it, and can put her in mind of it oftener than those who are accustomed to hear it. Besides, Mrs. Fletcher has a good deal of it herself, and Rose too.”

“ Well, but he was so prejudiced against the Signor.”

“ Was he? I thought they seemed to like talking to one another.”

“ Aye, afterwards; but you have no idea how very rudely he spoke at first.” So Anna told what had happened just after their arrival. Mary owned that he had been wrong; but would not agree that there was no merit in his politeness afterwards, because it must all be ascribed to the Signor's irresistible attractions. Yet she liked Signor Elvi quite as well as Anna did.

Their younger guests were then discussed; honourable mention being made of a large variety of fine qualities. In this case, neither sister exceeded the other; for the praise of both

was superlative. Beginning with their hair, and ending with their sentiments, it was found that they were altogether delightful.

“Upon the whole, Mary, has the day been what you expected, what you wished for?”

“In some things, much pleasanter; but—— and yet it was hardly likely that, the very first day, any opportunity should happen for talking about—— what we want Mrs. Fletcher to talk to us about.”

“Whenever she does, it will be in a way that we shall like, I know,” said Anna.

“How can you know? Mamma has not been mentioned to-day, nor any subject of that kind.”

“Not of that kind exactly,” said Anna; “and yet I am quite sure of it. Selina asked me if there was a church-yard in Audley Park, or within sight of it; and she said, that if she had a fine estate, she would take care to have a church-yard within sight. I said, I supposed she meant for the same reason that some grand prince, I forget who, had a man to put him in mind every day that he must die. Then she began telling me about a mausoleum in the

Duke of D——'s park; but her mother looked at her, and she stopped just when she had said that the duchess was buried there. She was going to mention the duchess's children, I know, when Mrs. Fletcher put her in mind that we had no mother. She is a kind, sweet woman; and I love her dearly already."

"It would be very strange if we did not," said Mary, "considering whose friend she was before we were born."

Mary had now opened her Bible, and they read together, as they always did at night, when any thing had prevented their reading with their father below. It was very late, and Mr. Byerley had been some time in vain trying to sleep. The conversation in the next room disturbed him; and the continued murmur while Mary read, made him suppose that they were not yet thinking of sleep. He rose and tapped at their door. "Who is there? Is it you, papa?" said Anna, opening the door. When Mr. Byerley saw the closing book in Mary's hand, he gave his blessing to his children, and advised them to seek repose. Their minds, as they composed

themselves to rest, were full of thankfulness for the new pleasures of companionship which the day had brought them; and Anna began, for the first time, to be aware of the blessing of having a father whom she could love without fearing in any painful degree.

CHAPTER IV.

Pleasure or Pain?

AT the sight of four saddle-horses and a carriage at Mr. Byerley's door, the population of A—— began to assemble for the purpose of speculation as to what sort of a journey was about to be undertaken. That part of the population is meant, which was dressed and on foot by eight o'clock; for the grooms and the coachman were very punctual. Here, a workman with his frail basket of tools on his shoulder, stood to see the provision packed in under the carriage-seat; there, a boy who had been birds'-nesting, passed so close before the pony's eyes, that it reared. Here, a milliner's apprentice lingered in hopes of a glimpse of the riders for whom the side-saddles were destined; and there, an old

man who was going to sun himself in the church-yard, stood leaning on his staff, to watch the departure of the company. Presently the young ladies were mounted, and patting the necks of their steeds to sooth them till the signal of departure should be given. Then was heard the slam of the carriage-door, the crack of the whip, and the crash of the wheels on the gravel. The cavalcade gradually disappeared at the turn of the road, and the gazers looked at one another, and betook themselves their several ways.

It was a beautiful morning: no cloud in the sky, no dust on the road; but all fresh, fragrant, and green, in the meadows and hedges. The carriage-party, consisting of Mr. and Mrs. Fletcher, their daughter Selina, and Mary Byerley, began to talk all at once, as is the natural impulse from rapid motion of an agreeable kind; and the enquiries went round, "Have you room?" "I am afraid the basket incommodes you:" "let me put away your shawl, for you will not want it;" and so on. To which Mr. Fletcher added, "Have you provided umbrellas, Miss Mary?"

“Umbrellas!” said Mary; “when there is not a cloud in the sky?”

“There was no cloud in the sky at this time yesterday, and what a deluge of rain we have had since!”

It appeared that the servants had marked this fact, for the handles of a very satisfactory number of umbrellas peeped out when sought for.

“How well your sister rides!” observed Mary, as Rose Fletcher cantered past the carriage, and waved her hand in passing.

“Where can Anna be? She cannot have passed without our seeing her;” said Selina, standing up to look before and behind. Far, very far behind, not cantering, nor apparently dreaming of cantering, was Anna, pacing soberly, side by side with Signor Elvi, either talking or listening very earnestly.

“O, look! look!” cried Selina; “they have forgotten every thing but what they are talking about. I wonder whether he is telling her about his poor wife and children.”

“Or about his beautiful estate that he will never see again,” said Mary.

“ Or about the dear friend he was obliged to leave in prison,” added Selina.

“ Sit down, Selina !” said her father, in a voice which silenced her.

After a long pause, Mrs. Fletcher began to talk with Mary about various trifles ; but the conversation was far from amusing till Mr. Fletcher, after a long yawn, took a book from his pocket, and began to read very attentively. Then the two young heads met under one parasol, and carried on a busy talk, with low voices, and much care to avoid attracting the notice of the reader. Room was presently made for Mrs. Fletcher’s companionship, and then the girls forgot to wish the gentleman away, except when a finger was held up to say “ hush !”

It was observed, at length, that Mr. Fletcher had ceased to read. The book was not laid aside, but closed with a finger between the leaves, while he looked over the side of the carriage. The three bonnets emerged from beneath the parasol, and every body cried, “ How beautiful !”

“ I was wondering,” said Mr. Fletcher,

laughing, "whether you would actually pass by this view without looking about you."

"You would not have allowed us, surely, sir," said Mary.

"Nay; no doubt your fine imaginations were furnishing you with something much more beautiful than any thing vulgar eyes can look upon."

Mary, young as she was, and modest as became her youth, was little daunted by Mr. Fletcher's rough manner and speech. It was probably because she was more humble than Selina, that she was less mortified by any rebuke or sign of contempt. Selina's silence was not that of humility. If not allowed to be sentimental in speech, she did not change her style of conversation, but indulged her dreams of the imagination in silence; while her very silence expressed that she did not think her father worthy to sympathize in her pleasures. Mrs. Fletcher never interfered between them, or attempted to make her husband and children understand one another better. She was very timid, rather indolent, and somewhat inclined to be sentimental, though not

in the childish way in which she encouraged her daughters to be so.

“ This place is very much altered within a few years : I should scarcely have known it again,” said Mr. Fletcher to himself, as they passed a gentleman’s estate.

“ Yes,” said Mary ; “ even I can remember the time when there were no corn-fields where they now stretch almost as far as we can see.”

“ This was all common : was it not ?” said Mr. Fletcher. “ I think it was a very bleak common, with nothing but furze growing upon it, when I saw it last.”

“ Yes, sir ; and the owner of it had a great deal of trouble about the alterations he wished to make. But you see he persevered.”

“ What sort of trouble ?”

“ The poor people were discontented when their cows were not allowed to graze, and when they could not cut their turf on the common any longer.”

“ Well ; do not you think it was very hard upon them ?”

“ I dare say it was, at first ; but papa says it

is much better worth while to grow corn enough to maintain a great many men, than only grass enough for a few cows."

Mr. Fletcher nodded; and Selina observed that all the rest of the way he enquired of Mary who lived at every gentleman's seat they passed. Sometimes she knew, and sometimes she did not; but he did not sneer when she had no satisfactory answer to give. One mansion, which stood on a lawn a little way back from the road, appeared in a state of lamentable ruin. It was unroofed, and the stone pillars and doorways, and naked window-sills, were blackened with smoke. In answer to Mr. Fletcher's question, "When was this burned down?" Mary told all that she knew of the when and the how; and then turned to the ladies to relate some circumstances of a different kind. Notwithstanding Selina's exclamations of admiration and pity, and his wife's heightened colour, which testified to the deep interest of the story, Mr. Fletcher also for once seemed inclined to listen.

"Eh? What was that?" said he, after leaning forwards, in vain, to hear.

“ I was telling what happened at the fire,” said Mary. “ There was a poor old man in the house at the time, who had arrived only the day before to see Colonel Osborne. He had belonged to his regiment, I believe. He was sleeping high up stairs, at the back of the house, and nobody remembered him when the fire was discovered. Miss Osborne recollected him at last, and while every body was busy, she wrapt a blanket round her and flew up the back stairs. The curtains of the old man’s bed were on fire, and he was fast asleep when she burst in. She thought he was suffocated; but as soon as she dashed some water on his face, he roused himself enough to let her put the woollen coverlid over his shoulders, and lead him down the burning stairs. While she was helping him, the blanket slipped, and her gown-sleeve caught fire. She was dreadfully burned; but she scarcely felt the pain, while the stairs cracked and cracked again at every step they took, and the flames rushed and roared all round them. At the foot of the stairs she met her father, coming in despair to look for her; but though he saw how she

was blackened with smoke, he asked no questions till he had helped her to get the old man beyond the reach of the burning rafters which fell on the lawn."

"Bravo! Like daughter, like father," cried Mr. Fletcher. "But what became of her?"

"Her face was so much burned that nobody could know her for the Miss Osborne that used to be so much admired; and what is worse, her left arm is so shrunk up, that she never can use it again. As for the poor old man, between the fire, and the fright and the grief, he was quite worn out, and he died the next week."

"What a disastrous fire!" exclaimed Mr. Fletcher. "How the young lady must wish that she had staid where she was safe!"

"O! no, sir," said Mary, in a low voice.

"Why, you say she did not save the old man after all."

"No; but what a conscience she would have had all her life long! Do you think all her beauty and the use of all her limbs would have made up for that?"

"Well then, she must wish that the fire had

never happened. Why do you shake your head now ?”

“ Because it is worth all she suffered, and more, to know what she *can* do on such an occasion. She need never be afraid again that she shall not be able to do her duty, or to bear the consequences.”

“ Her father, at least, must be very sorry that the fire happened.”

“ I think not still,” said the persevering Mary. “ If you were to see him with his daughter for only one half hour, you would find out how he loves her, and tries to make her feel what has happened as little as possible ; but he can never be sorry that it has been proved what a daughter he has. When she begins to repent of what she did, he may begin to be sorry for the occasion ; but that will never, never be.”

“ Well, you shall have it all your own way, because you are right, I believe,” said Mr. Fletcher. “ But I hope, my dear, *your* father will have some pleasanter proof that you have a strong mind and a willing spirit.”

Mary could not answer, as Mr. Fletcher looked

kindly at her. He soon opened his book again, and nobody spoke till the carriage stopped at the door of the Audley Arms.

The party presently dispersed themselves in groups about the park. Anna and Selina, of course, flew to each other, as soon as the one had alighted from her pony, and the other from the carriage. Arm in arm, they wandered away under the shade of the avenue. Rose and Mary, with their sketch-book, explored their way to the Ruin, to which the people of the inn had directed them; and they were immediately followed by Mrs. Fletcher and their Italian friend. Mr. Byerley also seemed disposed to accompany them; but Mr. Fletcher persuaded him to go round a longer way, for the purpose of witnessing the result of an experiment in tillage, which he knew to have been made on a piece of land adjoining the park. At the Ruin they were all to meet at two o'clock; by which time the servants were to have spread the dinner at the precise point of view where prospect-hunters were wont to feast body and soul at the same time.

The members of the three detachments all en-

joyed themselves in their several ways ; the four who were together, perhaps the most. Signor Elvi could draw well, and he superintended Mary's sketch, to her great profit and pleasure. He advised her not to attempt the more extensive view which, though spread temptingly before them, could not easily be transferred to paper with all its flitting lights and shadows, its sloping lawns and wooded banks, and streams that peeped out where the sunshine fell brightest. He rather recommended a particular angle of the Ruin, whose massy stone-work was finely contrasted with the light birch which waved near. He took her pencil, and on the back of a letter showed her, with a few rapid strokes, what kind of effect he thought might be produced. When he had seen her make a successful beginning, he carried off Rose to a little distance, that she might attempt the same subject from a different point of view ; to which her only objection was, that she should be too far off to hear the conversation.

“ Oh ! that will be too sad,” exclaimed he :
“ no lady must feel forlorn to-day. Mrs.



Fletcher and I will sit between you, and tell you tales to beguile your tasks."

Mrs. Fletcher was willing, but observed that her daughter scarcely understood French well enough to enjoy a narrative related in it. The good-natured Signor therefore attempted to make himself understood in English, which he spoke better than might have been expected from his very short practice, but yet so as to render it very difficult for the hearers to maintain their gravity long. From the beginning of his tale, his auditors imagined that it was to be of a melancholy cast; but as soon as the narrator became aware that his broken language was an impediment to the serious impression he meant to produce, he dexterously placed his personages in new situations, and gave so strange a turn to the incidents he had related, that the whole became comic, and the girls were supplied with a good reason for the mirth which they could not have suppressed. Their drawing, meantime, went on but slowly; for they sat, pencil in hand, looking towards their companions instead of the Ruin, and when they began to laugh, all hope

of steadying their hands again speedily was over.

“Eh! well,” said he, rising at length, “laugh as you will, but draw also.” And with all gravity he began to criticise; but again and again, as often as they looked towards one another, or some odd phrase which they had just heard occurred to them, there was a fresh burst. It ended in their being too weak, with hunger and mirth, to do any thing more before dinner, while their friend’s politeness could not allow him to leave their sketches unfinished.

In a little while, the whole party being assembled, except Anna and her friend, and the cloth being spread temptingly on the turf, every body sat down to eat. When, however, knives and forks were laid across, and the empty bottles outnumbered the full ones, and still the two girls did not appear, Mrs. Fletcher and Mary grew rather uneasy. Mr. Byerley went to the brow of the eminence on which they sat, and looked round in vain. Signor Elvi rose to go in search of them, but Mr. Fletcher prevented him, declaring it impossible that any harm should befall them in the

park, and that nothing was so probable as that they should forget the time. On enquiry it appeared that neither of them had a watch.

“No matter,” said Mr. Fletcher; “which of them would think of using it if she had? Depend upon it, they are reclining under a tree or beside a brook, wondering if ever mortals felt such friendship for one another before; or perhaps weeping over the tales Miss Anna heard from the Signor this morning.”

Signor Elvi looked very grave, but said nothing.

“It is time they were dining, however,” said Mrs. Fletcher; “and if they have lost their way, they must be quite exhausted.”

“My dear,” said her husband, “I thought you had known better than to suppose they can care about eating when they have something so much better to do. I think, sir,” turning to Mr. Byerley, “that it is time we were finding our way to the bridge, unless the ladies require a longer rest.”

He rose and sauntered away; and his wife immediately, by Mr. Byerley’s advice, dispatched

two of the servants different ways, in search of the lost companions. Mary sent some biscuits by each ; and having left orders with the remaining servant to make the young ladies comfortable when they should arrive, and to direct them towards the bridge, the rest of the party followed Mr. Fletcher.

Anna and Selina were soon found, within half a mile of the place of rendezvous, walking as leisurely as if the sun had just risen, and they had had the whole day before them. They were both sad and disinclined to eat ; and in a very few minutes they followed the party to the bridge. Very little notice was taken of them there but by the anxious mother and sister, who having satisfied themselves that nothing disastrous had happened, tried to cheer and amuse them ; but they were still silent and sad. They saw, like every body else, how majestically the river wound round the bases of the hills, now darkened by overhanging thickets, now gleaming as a flood of light fell upon a reach of it, now sweeping by the terrace of a lordly mansion, and now bending round the promontory on which was a single

cottage, with its one willow dipping into the water. They saw, like every one else, how the far-distant city rose to shut in the view at the further limit of the valley ; and, like every one else, they listened to the many sounds which came from far and near. The chapel-clock in the park was heard to strike ; the creaking wagon, with the jingling harness of the team came down the steep slope from the farms ; the lapse of the river under the arches of the bridge gave out a never-ceasing sound ; and the cawing of the rooks as they sailed round the tree-tops suited well with it. The merry voices of children came from behind the laurel-hedge which separated the parsonage from the road. Anna and her friend saw, heard, and felt the beauty of all this ; but it seemed to them a melancholy beauty, because their minds were melancholy. It grated upon their feelings to hear any observations made on the scene before them ; and when Mr. Fletcher laughed loudly, they left the balustrades of the bridge, through which they had been gazing, and went down to find a seat on the sloping bank, where they might sit with their feet

touching the brink of the river. Mrs. Fletcher followed, and as soon as the girls perceived her, they ran to take each an arm. She soon discovered what was in their minds, and Anna could not have desired a more ready listener to the tale of sorrow which she had heard that morning, and which had affected her very deeply.

“Did you see, Anna,” said Selina, “how he turned to listen when the children in the parsonage-garden shouted at their play?”

“O, yes,” replied Anna; “and he says it gives him pleasure to see us and talk to us, because he can think of his own daughters all the time. What charming girls they must be! and just our age, Selina!”

“I wish we could make ourselves so like them that we could comfort him better than we can do now.”

“We must be very unlike them, I am sure, Selina; for he says they are very gay and lively.”

“I always thought you had been so, Anna,” said Mrs. Fletcher. Anna sighed, and replied that she was merry when she had nothing to make her sad.

“But, my love,” said Mrs. Fletcher, “you must endeavour not to give way so much. You must take the Signor himself for an example there. If you had seen him two hours ago, you would scarcely believe that he had ever felt melancholy in his life.”

Selina and Anna were both rather dismayed when they heard of their foreign friend’s genius for comic narrative. “How could he forget so soon?” thought they.

Mrs. Fletcher was surprised that he should have told his domestic tale to one so young as Anna; but it appeared all very natural when she explained how it happened. He spoke of the young ladies of Italy as the subject which he thought would most interest his companion; this led to some mention of his own children: and as there was a full share of curiosity in Anna, and an interest and sympathy far more engaging than curiosity, he had gone on to tell one circumstance after another, till she had heard enough to fill her whole soul with admiration and pity. Her feelings were strong, and she had never tried to restrain them; and as this was the first time

she had ever heard so sad a tale from the actual sufferer, and that sufferer was peculiarly interesting and amiable, she was in danger of being more strongly excited than her health and spirits would bear. If she had had a judicious friend at hand to have directed her feelings aright, she might have derived much benefit from the new views of human suffering which were now opened to her ; but this was not the case. Mrs. Fletcher seemed, in the education of her own daughters, quite unaware that a feeling, innocent or amiable in itself, may be indulged to an injurious excess. On the present occasion, she was delighted to witness in Anna indications of the sensibility she had loved in her mother ; and though she did not exactly tell her so in words, she made her understand it by kissing her, and whispering how she loved to be reminded of her early friend, whose congeniality of feeling with her own was perfect. This led to a long conversation, which at some other time would have been as useful as it was delightful to Anna, by softening her heart and exercising her tenderest affections. Just now, however, when her heart was already melting,

and her imagination highly excited, this further stimulus was not only needless, but very hurtful; and the youthful mind which should have been this day open to enjoyment, was tormented with tender sufferings, and weakened by a melancholy which it had never experienced before. Some of the natural evil consequences followed immediately. Mr. Byerley, seeing traces of tears on his daughter's cheeks, and thinking them particularly ill-timed, was provoked to speak hastily to her. Anna was seldom or never known to be sullen, but to-day she was sunk below all power of instant recovery; and her temper gave way at the first irritation. Mary gave her an affectionate hint to try to be cheerful; but, for once, she received a pettish answer. The Signor himself was not quite in her good graces, for he was disposed to be agreeable. He sang, and his song was indeed plaintive as she could wish; but long before she had recovered it, and while his tones of deep feeling yet thrilled in her heart, he was talking with her father as if nothing had happened. The pleasures of the ramble through the park, on the return of the party to the inn, were

lost on her, and the amusing bustle of departure was also unheeded ; but horse-exercise is so exhilarating as to lighten the deepest depression, as even Anna found. When they had left behind the melting sunlights on the woods, and when the cool evening breeze blew in their faces as they crossed a heath in the twilight, she willingly obeyed her father's signal to hasten on, shook the bridle, urged on the race, and, for a time, forgot her sensibilities.

Every body was tired, dull, and sleepy, when the carriage stopped at Mr. Byerley's door. Nobody relished the candle-light : no lady wished for supper, or refused to retire when the gentlemen had dispatched their sandwiches. When Mrs. Fletcher had bade her children good-night up stairs, it appeared that the young folks were pairing off, according to a new arrangement. Mary and Rose, Anna and Selina.

“ My loves, it really makes me uneasy,” expostulated Mrs. Fletcher ; “ you will talk half the night, I know, tired to death as you are.”

“ No, mamma, we will not indeed.”

“ Then what is the use of being together if

you do not talk? Do be persuaded. I can trust your sisters to take care of you; but you two will wear each other out."

A repeated promise, however, won her consent. They kept their promise. Having kissed with melancholy smiles, and promised each other never to forget this never-to-be-forgotten day, they lost all remembrance of it, and of every thing else in sleep.

CHAPTER V.

Friendship not always Bliss.

THERE had, as yet, been no time for due honour to be paid to the favourite green parlour ; but early the next evening, those of the party who were the most likely to appreciate its peculiarities, were assembled there. The harp-lute caught the eye of the Signor as soon as he entered. “ Ah, ah !” cried he, pointing to it with delight, “ may I ?” and he took it down, and tuned it. Just when he was about to begin, his heart seemed to fail him. He laid it down, with a sigh, saying, “ It is long——” A glance between Anna and Selina supplied what he would have said. Mary felt it all, as much as they ; but she did not content herself with a sympathizing sigh. She took the instrument, and struck up her

father's favourite Spanish song of Liberty. As she hoped, the exile's current of feeling was diverted from melancholy objects. "Libertà! libertà!" he echoed, starting up and waving his hand, while his eyes sparkled; and as often as the Signor looked up and smiled, he joined in the burden, "Libertà! libertà!"

He was delighted with Mary's singing, which was very unlike what he had heard from any other young lady since he had been in England. She had been well taught; but she had that natural taste for music—the ear and the soul for it—without which no teaching is of any avail. She sang much and often, not because she had any particular aim at being very accomplished, but because she loved it; or, as she said, because she could not help it. She sang to Nurse Rickham's children; she sang as she went up and down stairs; she sang when she was glad, and when she was sorry; when her papa was at home, because he liked it; when he was out, because he could not be disturbed by it. In the woods, at noon-day, she sang like a bird, that a bird might answer her; and if she woke in the dark

night, the feeling of solemn music came over her, with which she dared not break the silence. Every thing suggested music to her. Every piece of poetry which she understood and liked, formed itself into melody in her mind, without an effort : when a gleam of sunshine burst out, she gave voice to it ; and long before she had heard any cathedral service, the chanting of the Psalms was familiar to her by anticipation.

Anna had as good an ear, and a much richer voice, but not quite so prevailing a love for the art : if art it may be called, in such a case as theirs. She was always able and willing to sing, but not so continually and spontaneously alive to music as her sister. She would join in when her sister began ; and whenever they sat at work in the balcony, their voices would ring clear and sweet, through the house, by the hour together. Their father loved to hear them, and the servants themselves were never tired.

When Signor Elvi had heard several songs for which he had asked, (scarcely with the hope that Mary would be able to gratify him,) he mentioned at last a duet, which she had never

seen or heard of. It seldom happened that she could not sing whatever was asked for; for her father took care that she was supplied with good music of all kinds, ancient and modern; and when she had once noticed a melody, it was never forgotten, or might be revived on the slightest suggestion. The duet now mentioned, she knew nothing about; but thought she and Anna might learn it if the Signor would sing it to them. He was well pleased to do so, and they established themselves in the balcony, sitting at his feet, and learning almost as much from his countenance as his voice. The thing was accomplished presently, as much to his amazement as pleasure; and he sat with his head on his hand, listening with delight to the music of his own land. Mrs. Fletcher understood and felt the pleasure too; and their father, who was walking in the garden with Mr. Fletcher, stopped and listened, without remembering to apologize to his companion for the sudden interruption of their conversation. No new air was lost on him, especially when sung by his daughters.

“How sweet, how wild, Mary’s voice is!”

observed Mrs. Fletcher to her daughters, as they sat within. "I have not heard such another since her mother sang to me."

"Which is the most like Mrs. Byerley?" asked Rose.

"I scarcely know," replied her mother: "they both remind me of her perpetually. Anna has her mother's countenance, and I catch occasional glimpses of the mirth which I used to love."

"And the sensibility," said Selina.

"Mary has the sensibility to an equal degree."

"Oh mamma! no."

"I discover as great a depth of feeling in Mary as in Anna, with a stronger judgment. Yes, Mary is the most like her mother. They are charming companions for you, my dears, in most respects, and I am very glad you have met."

"In most respects!" repeated Selina: "in every respect. They are every thing that is dear and delightful!"

"Take care, my little enthusiast," said her mother, laying one hand on Selina's shoulder,

and pointing with the other to the balcony: "look at your friends now, and tell me if you would like to make exactly such an appearance."

Selina saw that Mary's hair, disordered and out of curl, hung in a very slovenly way about her face; and that Anna's silk frock was stained from top to bottom with something which had been thrown over it.

"Oh! mamma," exclaimed Selina, "how can you expect them to be quite neat and handy, when they have no mother to teach them?"

"I do not expect it, my dear; I only point out to you that they are not quite perfect. If we could carry them away with us, I think we might soon correct these bad habits; and they, in their turn, might improve you in some things of more importance."

Rose and her sister besought Mrs. Fletcher to try to induce Mr. Byerley to part with them for a while; and as Mr. Fletcher had himself proposed it, believing that Mary would be a valuable companion to Rose, it was agreed that

Mr. Byerley's consent should be asked without delay.

While this matter was under consideration, Mr. Byerley entered and seated himself by Mrs. Fletcher. The girls presently withdrew.

"Can you guess what we were talking of when you came?" said Mrs. Fletcher.

"Your countenance tells me," replied Mr. Byerley, nodding towards the balcony. "There is much to be said on that subject, my dear madam; and I do assure you that the best kindness you can show us all, is to tell me truly and exactly what impression my poor motherless girls have made upon you."

"I will do so with the greatest pleasure," replied Mrs. Fletcher, smiling; "for the impression is very much like what I know you wish it to be." And while she praised, the father listened with pleased attention.

"I have tried to make them good," he said, when there was a pause: "they are affectionate, and they are simple. There is little in their conduct to myself which I wish otherwise; and no sisters were ever more attached to one ano-

ther than they. But there is much which wants correction; and more evil in prospect, I am afraid."

"Their personal habits want correction, I grant, without dispute," replied Mrs. Fletcher; "and I have a plan to propose for that purpose: but what further evil is in prospect I do not see."

"An evil of much greater magnitude than their sad external habits, which, however, are grievous enough," replied their father. "You know my hatred of all schools, and of the usual method of female education."

"Oh! yes," said Mrs. Fletcher, smiling: "your prejudices on that subject are completely identified with yourself."

"The reason of that hatred, which may have some prejudice mixed up with it, is, that almost all the women whom I have known to have much feeling, have been victims to feeling. It seems to me, that through some grand error in education, women become either unfeeling or sentimental—given either to levity or romance."

“ I cannot agree with you at all,” said Mrs. Fletcher; “ and I am very sure you have been unfortunate in your experience of female society; or that one beautiful example of sobriety and depth of feeling united, has made you imagine that the method of education adopted in that particular case, must be the only good one.”

“ I have indeed wished that my girls should be placed, as nearly as possible, in the circumstances which made their mother what she was; but I begin to have my fears. Their minds are, in some respects, too forward for their age; their imaginations are growing too fast.”

“ If you think so of your own children,” said Mrs. Fletcher, “ what must be your opinion of mine?”

“ I judge in no case but that in which I am most nearly concerned,” replied Mr. Byerley. “ How your daughters act and feel I pretend not to know; and if I knew, I should not interfere with criticisms or advice. But, as to my own girls, I have seen Mary often lately so absorbed in her book of poetry or in a reverie, that it is difficult to recall her attention to necessary

things; and Anna's red eyes and melancholy countenance have really distressed me the last two days."

"I am sure their feelings are of a most amiable kind," said Mrs. Fletcher; "and such as I would not repress for the world."

"Amiable, I grant, and natural," replied the father; "but I think they come too early, and that there is too much of them. Nobody values more than I do the lofty and deep emotion which prompts to the most vigorous and benevolent action; but feeling of this kind cannot subsist in the mind in mature years, if an excessive sensibility be allowed early and idly to excite the imagination. If Anna's compassion for Signor Elvi's misfortunes could lead her to active exertions on behalf of him and his family, let her pity him as much as she will; but as she can do nothing, and tries to do nothing, I am afraid of the consequences of so many sighs and tears, natural and amiable as they may be in themselves."

"I believe Mary feels quite as much," observed Mrs. Fletcher, "and to better purpose,

for she tries to amuse him, instead of awakening painful feelings.”

“If that was the case always, I should fear nothing,” replied Mr. Byerley; “but I dread the effects of the reveries over *Paradise Lost*, and——”

“*Paradise Lost* will do her no harm,” said Mr. Fletcher, who had joined them unperceived, and was leaning over the back of the sofa: “no imagination was ever the worse for being early nourished on that book. It is the flimsy, love-sick, sentimental poetry of modern times, which makes women so weak and tiresome, as those of them are who pretend to be bookish, or to have fine feelings.”

“I should not have thought,” said Mr. Byerley, smiling, “that you would have admitted poetry under any shape into your daughters’ library.”

“You do not know me then,” replied Mr. Fletcher. “If you and I were to compare our notions of a perfect woman, I believe they would be found pretty much alike. She must have an intellect capable of grasping high thoughts, and

a heart expanded by boundless feelings, or religion cannot have done all it may do for her. It is because I value the noble faculty of imagination so highly, that it grieves me to see it weakened and perverted by early indulgence."

"As it is in my girls," said Mr. Byerley, gravely.

"No," said Mr. Fletcher, "not in *your* girls; at least, not in Mary; and not to an irremediable degree in Anna: but it is time you were taking care."

"If I had Mr. Byerley's fears, (which I have not,)" said Mrs. Fletcher, "I should take the girls into the world; or, at least, let them see more society here. If they had a greater variety of realities to think about, they would have fewer imaginations."

"I agree with you perfectly, my dear," said Mr. Fletcher. And now it was most clearly proved, in various ways, to Mr. Byerley, that the best possible plan he could pursue with his daughters, would be to let them join their friends in a journey to the Continent, where they were

going to reside for two or three years. Notwithstanding so many arguments, however, the father could not be persuaded of the possibility of parting with his children; and the most he could be brought to say was, that he would endeavour so to arrange his plans, as to join Mr. Fletcher's family in the south of France in the course of a few months. He laughed as he adverted to the remarks which might very fairly be made on this new proof of his eccentricity, if his neighbours should lay hold of the idea that he went abroad for the moral improvement of the girls; as if they could not be made wise and good in their own country.

“The difference of country has nothing to do with it,” said Mr. Fletcher: “if we were going to Dublin or Edinburgh instead of Tours, you would come to us as you intend doing now. Your object is change of society more than of place, as far as your daughters are concerned. As for your own peculiar tastes, you can gratify them more easily abroad than you could in London, where such a politician as yourself can never be left long unmolested. But, Byerley,

you surely do not regard what any body says about your domestic plans !”

“ Nobody so little,” replied Mr. Byerley, “ as my practice has proved; but I sometimes amuse myself with the remarks which are made on my oddity. I hope my girls will never suffer by the reputation of that sort which I have gained.”

“ Not they: it is more likely they should suffer by our leaving them for the hour together, as we are doing now, to listen to the Signor’s pretty, soft sentiments.”

On approaching the balcony, it was found, however, that though the Signor was holding forth on a pretty subject, it was by no means a sentimental one. He was describing the process of rearing silk-worms in Italy, and of obtaining and managing their produce. Thence he proceeded to answer some questions of Rose’s about the silk manufactory at Lyons, of which he had talked with her father at dinner on the day of their arrival. Anna had not listened, and was not therefore much interested in what was now said.

The evening sun shone bright and warm into

the balcony, when Mary gave up her seat there to Mrs. Fletcher, while she took her place at the tea-table. Remarks were made on the luxury of such an assemblage in such a place, on the beauty of the prospect, the fragrance of the flowers, and many other causes of enjoyment; when Mr. Fletcher, ever afraid of sentiment, cried out: "Pray, Miss Mary, do not let the tea be the worse for every thing else being so charming. Not all the prettiness in the world will make up for the tea being spoiled." He appealed to the Signor, who did not appear to share Anna's indignation; though he smiled while he replied, that he liked perfection of comfort when it could be had; and that, if he were an Englishman, he did not doubt that it would be a drawback to his pleasure to be disappointed in the strength and flavour of his tea.

Selina and her friend thought this was overstrained politeness, till they perceived that their foreign friend sipped his excellent coffee with real relish. They forgot to drink theirs till it was cold; but as they probably did not notice the fact, it did not signify.

Signor Elvi did not appear at the breakfast-table the next morning; and, on enquiry, it was found that he had gone out very early, leaving word that he should not return till night. No one could imagine whither he had departed: he knew not one person in the neighbourhood, and had no connexions of business or pleasure out of London. Had he gone in one of the coaches? No: it was not coach time when he went out. He took no parcel with him; nothing but his hat and stick, and a book which peeped out of his pocket, the servant said. She could not tell in what direction he had turned his steps. No further information was to be obtained, and the plans for the day were laid without any reference to their stranger guest.

The principal plan was for a long afternoon visit to the farm, to drink new milk, play with the children, and see all that was to be seen. Mrs. Fletcher had known Nurse Rickham in former days: she had now seen her at Mr. Byerley's house, but had promised to visit her in her own homestead, where she might see all the children gathered together, and make some acquaint-

ance with the husband. At a little past four, accordingly, Kitty stood by the farm-yard gate, dressed in her best, to open it for the ladies to enter. Tommy pulled his fore-lock without ceasing, when they came in sight; and Nurse, with her starched mob and clean white apron, advanced smiling and blushing to welcome her guests. In answer to her respectful enquiries about Mr. Byerley's health, Mary told her that he would follow presently with Mr. Fletcher, to join them in time for tea. Nurse thought herself only too much honoured, but had not expected any but the ladies, as the gentleman from abroad had passed through and far away so early in the morning. Had he been at the farm? it was eagerly asked. Yes: as Robin was leading out the team, the gentleman who spoke so very strangely, asked leave to pass through the yard and the paddock behind, as this seemed the shortest way to the hills he wished to reach. Robin could scarcely understand one word of his enquiries; so he called Nurse Rickham, who, having been more used to gentlefolks, was able to afford him more satisfaction. She described





the paths among the hills to him, and led him through two fields, so that he could not possibly mistake his way. All this was very strange. Anna was sure that he was gone into solitude to compose a poem:—who knew what might be in it! Selina having perceived that her mother looked somewhat grave, formed the horrible conjecture that he meant to destroy himself, as she had heard some of his countrymen had done under the pressure of distress. It was in vain that she was reminded how cheerful he was the night before; how he had mentioned his plans for the next week; and how little reason there was to suppose that he was now oppressed by any new or overwhelming grief or difficulty. Still Selina was persuaded in her own mind that he would be found weltering in his blood, or hanging from a tree. What other supposition was at all probable? How did her mamma, or Rose, or Mary, account for his absence? Her mamma left it to be explained by time; Rose ventured no conjecture; and Mary gently asked if no instance had ever been known of people retiring into woods, wildernesses, and fields, for

the sake of solitude, and the employments which belong to solitude.

“ You do not know all that I could tell you,” said Selina, sadly and mysteriously, “ or you would not think he could have any such purpose.”

“ I should like to hear, if you can tell me,” said Mary. “ Do tell me.”

Selina drew her aside, and whispered: “ Signor Elvi is not a Christian.”

“ I know it,” replied Mary: “ I heard papa say so.”

“ Then how can you think he can like to be alone as a religious man would?”

“ Because I think he is a religious man.”

Selina looked very much puzzled. Mary said: “ Some other time I will tell you what papa told me about this, and then you will understand what I mean.”

“ Does your papa think that Signor Elvi is religious?”

“ Yes, he does; but do not fancy that papa is not a Christian. And I do assure you that you may make yourself quite easy about Signor Elvi.

He is too wise and good to throw away his life as soon as misfortunes happen."

"I do not blame people for destroying themselves so much as you do, Mary. They only do it when they are very miserable. I am more sorry for them than you are."

"Not more sorry, I hope," said Mary. "I am very sorry for their misery, and I am more sorry still that they have not strength to bear it. They are, indeed, more to be pitied than one can imagine."

"Not strength!" repeated Selina. "Well, now, I cannot help admiring their courage. I think it shows such great courage to leave every thing that they know, and go they do not know where—to take the leap in the dark, as somebody says."

"Do you not blame people then, for destroying themselves?" enquired Mary, perplexed in her turn.

"Oh yes, to be sure. It is very wrong, because——because——"

"Because of what?"

Selina did not seem quite ready with a reason.

Presently, however, she answered: "Because it offends God."

"Certainly," said Mary: "it offends God to refuse to bear whatever he appoints. It shows that we do not trust in him; it shows that we are very cowardly."

"Cowardly!" exclaimed Selina: "what! to do such a bold act as that?"

"Such a rash act," said Mary: "it is not the less cowardly, on the whole, for being rash. I know it must require some sort of vehement resolution to do the very deed—to cut one's throat across, or fire a pistol through one's brains."

"That is what I mean," interrupted Selina.

"But a man who shows this sort of courage, only has it because he wants a greater; he only chooses the shortest way of getting rid of his troubles, because he cannot bear the longer trial. I am sure, Selina, you must admire the courage that can bear on, and bear on, happen what will."

"Like the martyrs, and like the prisoners in the Inquisition. Oh yes!"

“And like many who never heard of the Inquisition, but who endure worse things than they could ever meet with there; troubles and griefs which last from year to year, and which oppress their wives or their children, or somebody else whom they care more about than themselves.”

Selina looked doubtful.

“I do not know any thing so grand,” continued Mary, “as to see any body—man, woman, or child, patiently and cheerfully bearing one affliction after another, without wanting any one to see or admire; giving up every thing most precious, as soon as required to do so, and growing more and more careful to make other people happy as they are less so themselves. How very selfish, how very cowardly, is the boldest man that ever cut his throat, in comparison with such a one!”

Selina felt this; but enquired: “Do you think Signor Elvi could be such a one if he is not a Christian?”

Mary pondered awhile before she answered:—
“I do not know: I will ask papa what he thinks. But I am very sure that a person so

kind-hearted to every body, so fond of his wife and children, and so very serious, as papa says he is about religion, could never, in his right senses, plunge himself into destruction, and every body that he cared for into misery.”

This last sentence furnished Selina with a new scheme. If Signor Elvi would not, in his right senses, hang himself, he might do so if driven mad by his misfortunes; and who could wonder if such should prove to be the case? It mattered not that he had been not only sane but cheerful the night before, and that Nurse Rickham was pleased with all that he had said, and with his manner of saying it, that morning; Selina was determined to be apprehensive: who or what, therefore, could prevent her being so?

Mary, on her part, was resolved to ascertain what Signor Elvi's principles were with respect to the duty of bearing the troubles of life with patience and cheerfulness. If she might judge from what she had seen, those principles were good; but she did not know how much allowance to make for differences of national character, and for constitutional temperament. She hoped

to obtain satisfaction for herself, and instruction for Selina, by telling her father her wishes, and requesting him to engage his foreign friend in conversation on such topics as might lead to an explanation of those of his opinions which she wished to ascertain.

In the meanwhile, she was glad to see how Anna had recovered her spirits. At the farm it was her wont to be gay, and the well-known objects there brought back the cheerfulness with which she was accustomed to view them. When in a merry mood, Anna was almost wild: she was so now. A spirited game at prison-bars was going on in the paddock, and Anna and Mr. Fletcher were the most daring and active of the players. Nobody excelled Mr. Fletcher at this kind of sport; and he was glad when an opportunity offered of engaging his girls in amusements which they relished far less than was natural at their age. Rose had now thrown aside her bonnet, and was as eager to break the bounds of her prison as little Tommy Rickham himself; but Selina, who was disappointed to find that Anna's sympathies were not as true to

her own as the needle to the pole, turned away with a sigh, and sought a shaded alley in the garden, where she nourished her tender fears in solitude, and grew more melancholy with every shout of laughter which reached her from the paddock. She could not forget Anna as she had just seen her, panting with heat and fatigue, her face flushed, her hair blown back, her eyes almost starting with eagerness as she turned, and wound about the palings, fled round and round, crossed and crossed again in the agony of escape, which left her no breath to cry out as her pursuer came nearer and nearer, and at last exactly missed her in his last attempt to catch her as she leaped over the boundary. How different from the Anna who wept under the trees in Audley Park! Selina was afraid that, after all, she had not found the friend after her own heart, whom she had congratulated herself on securing.

“My love,” said her mother, when she saw that her bowl of new milk stood untasted before her, while the rest of the party were enjoying the meal they had earned by exercise, “I am afraid you are not well, Selina.”

There was visible agitation about the lower part of the face while she replied, in a low voice, that she was not ill. Her father, whose back was towards her, turned suddenly round and looked her full in the face, while he felt her pulse with mock gravity, observing that there was no distemper but on the nerves, which certainly wanted bracing. In an instant, before she was aware, he held her hands behind her with one hand, and with the other dragged her to the very brink of the pond, as if he would throw her in. Selina screamed and struggled; every body else laughed, Anna rather more loudly than was accordant with her friend's sympathies. Mr. Fletcher let his prisoner escape, ran after her, and when he had given her such a chase as exhausted her breath, caught her, and whispering a few words, led her back to her seat at the table under the tree; he helped her plentifully with cake, thus giving her an opportunity of attesting his skill in restoring an appetite.

There was so much amusement afterwards for the gentlemen in accompanying the farmer through some of his fields—for Mrs. Fletcher in

quietly talking over old times with Nurse Rickham—and for the young people, in seeing the dairy-woman finish her milking, that it was dusk before they left behind them the bows and curtsies of the household at the farm, and quite dark when they reached home.

In the parlour was Signor Elvi, perfectly safe, reading very intently, and looking so placid, that it was evident no such direful thoughts as Selina had imagined, had disturbed any mind but her own. Anna retained, for the present, her conjecture about the poem; but, though all were full of curiosity respecting his day's adventures, no one made any allusion to them, except Mr. Fletcher, who observed on the universal predilection of patriots for the wilds of nature, for hills, heaths, and caves.

“It is universal because it is natural,” said Signor Elvi. “When men cannot breathe freely in despotic courts, they love to lay bare their bosoms to the winds. If they must be dumb before tyrants, they love to shout their songs of liberty in the depths of caverns. If they must smile falsely when the eyes of traitors are upon

them, they love to drop their tears into the mountain stream, while none look on but the faithful and silent stars. Nature is the heaven of patriots.”

“But, my dear sir, here are no tyrants to constrain you to silence; and it is to be hoped we are not traitors. Weep as much as you please, and I, for one, will promise not to report your tears.”

“You spoke of patriots,” said the foreigner, smiling; “could I guess that your thoughts were of myself?”

CHAPTER VI.

Departures.

THE next day was Sunday. Signor Elvi, whether a Christian or not, went to church with the family, apparently as a matter of course. Mary and Selina stole a glance at one another when the text of the sermon was given out: "Affliction worketh patience; and patience experience; and experience hope."

How often it happens, that when the attention has been fixed on any idea or feeling, or train of ideas and feelings, some circumstance, or a great variety of circumstances, happens to illustrate or impress yet more deeply the subject of our thought! How eminently useful, in this way, is public worship! for it is scarcely possible that the subject of discourse should not have pecu-

liarly engaged the attention of some one among the hearers so recently as to secure a preparatory interest which must give double effect to what is declared and enforced. This was the case in the present instance. The excellent sermon which Mary and Selina now heard, not only enlarged their views of the subject on which they had talked the day before, but was so fixed in their memories that it recurred to them for a long time afterwards, whenever suffering, fortitude, self-destruction, and even Signor Elvi and his countrymen were talked about.

The party returned from church by the longer way through the fields, which extended to the back gate of Mr. Byerley's garden. Mary had put her arm within her father's, as the Signor walked beside him. These three paced along slowly, while the rest went forward.

Mr. Byerley hoped that his friend had followed his own inclinations about attending worship, and had not accompanied the family merely out of complaisance and observance of custom.

"Convince yourself, from my freedom of yesterday," was the reply. "If I withdrew myself

freely for my own pleasure, think you not I would likewise withdraw rather than dishonour the worship of God by entering his temple with an unwilling heart?"

"I did not know that you could join in Christian worship with a willing heart."

"In some worship which is called Christian, I join not, because its superstition is greater than I can bear. Where the priest offers for the people prayers which they cannot understand, and makes them worship a dressed doll, and rings bells, and burns candles in the daylight, I feel no more that it is my God whom they worship, and I turn away as from idolatry. Such is the Christianity of my country. Far better is the simple homage of the spirit among the hills."

"Far better, indeed," said Mr. Byerley: "but why should not that simple homage be Christian? You have till lately seen no worship but the Catholic worship of your own country, where it is more grossly superstitious than almost any where else; but if you love truth, if you love religion as much as I believe you do,

you will not be satisfied till you have learned a little more what Christianity is. You have already found that Latin prayers, wax lights, and incense make no part of it ; and if you will go into our meeting-houses, you will find external observances more simplified still. From the solemn Easter service of our cathedrals, which you acknowledge to be impressive, down to the silent worship of the Friends' meeting-house, which you would perhaps find no less so, you might, by discovering what Christianity is not, become better informed than you now are what it is."

" I own, my friend, that this diversity is too perplexing for me. I meet many Christians ; and they all tell me differently of their faith. I——."

" Look to the records of their faith, and judge for yourself, instead of taking any man's word."

" I was about to say, that I look into the Scriptures and find many things which I cannot understand or believe ; but much, very much, which is more pure in morals, more lofty in feeling, more grand in piety to God, and more winning in love to man, than I can find in any

other religion, whether in the heart or in books. Therefore I read very often the words of Christ with veneration, and therefore I attend the worship of your churches. I believe that all things come from God, the consolations of all religions, and of your best religion among others; and as long as I make use of it and give thanks for it, it matters not to me to enquire about those parts which I cannot believe.”

“ You cannot be sure whether you can believe them or not till you do enquire,” observed Mr. Byerley, “ as you would yourself remark in any other case; and as I think you will admit hereafter, when you have learned more of our faith, as separate from the superstitions with which you have hitherto seen it united. If you will only study this subject as fairly as you do any other which interests you, you will find Christianity far more precious to you than you can conceive: more precious than the religion which you now value above every thing. It is, in fact, the same religion, enlarged and enriched.”

“ Ah! what is man without religion?” exclaimed his friend. “ I believe not myself to

have suffered more than many others ; but what but religion could have strengthened me to live? My country, my beautiful Italy, is spoiled and trampled on by tyrants ; and I, her son, who loved her so much, how should I escape? I have given in sacrifice all I have ; but neither myself nor her many devoted children have ransomed her from her slavery. Our struggles to set her free have doubled her chains ; and her oppressors laugh at her miseries and insult her defenders, who, torn from her bosom, mourn eternally their exile."

"The wrongs of your country, Elvi, afflict you more than your own. This is patriotism."

"Give me no unjust praise, my friend : my own sorrows find fewer words because they lie deeper. My home, and they who dwell there, shall see me no more ! When I saw my son fall on the field ; when his generous spirit escaped before he could speak the last words of love to me ; when, again, the sea rolled between me and my own land, and I had not given my wife one farewell, I thought that fate had heaped her last injuries upon me, and I trusted that I could not

live under so many griefs. But I talk no more of fate, but rather think of God; and though I live, and my griefs live also, and make a resting-place in my heart till death, I am content to remain till affliction has made me patient, and my patience has made me hopeful, as your apostle has wisely said. Now, what but religion could give me this content and this hope?"

"Nothing, my friend. No other spirit of peace is always awake and always nigh. But whence did you derive your religion?"

"When, in my youth, I ceased to be a Catholic, I did not cease to regard God; but not till I became helpless and friendless did I know the full worth of piety. When I looked round and found no home, I humbly sought my home in the Presence which is every where; when there was no one near to mourn with me, or to love me, it was my true relief to pray; and when I have hope for my children and for my country, it rejoices me to commit it to Him who can fulfil what I can only hope. And above all, when I hear my countrymen curse the authors of their sorrows, it comforts me to disarm those curses

with more kindly prayers. Oh ! that they would learn that revenge is not for man."

Mary thought that their friend had learned more from the gospel than he himself was aware of. So thought their father.

"I have been grieved, though not much surprised," said he, "to perceive how your countrymen long for revenge, and how bitterly they curse their oppressors."

"Alas !" replied Elvi, "it makes me mourn for them and for our cause. They desire to crush their enemies under their feet, to shed their blood as a welcome libation to freedom, to hunt them as blood-hounds follow their prey ; but the noblest hearts feel not thus. The strongest sight looks furthest, and sees a nobler issue than this. I ask them where is their faith, if not in Providence—in liberty. The chains of tyranny are strong, but the consuming power of time is yet stronger. Tyranny now puts forth her force to desolate the lands ; but there is an immortal vigour in liberty which shall make her the queen of the world, when prisons shall be razed, and when blood shall cease to be

poured out like water. This is the faith which I would give to those who will not receive a better. Yet some of them will not live, even by this faith."

Mary anxiously listened for what was to come next.

"If they have no higher faith than this," observed her father, "I do not wonder that they obey the impulse to cast off life and sorrow together."

"Nor I, my friends; for the temptation is indeed strong."

"You have felt it to be so."

"Once: one bitter hour—let us not speak of it. Now I am beyond its reach. I see how poor is the courage which cannot long endure. I see how impious is the impatience which will not wait till the designs of Providence are made known. I pity those who are thus weak, more than they pity me for what remains to me; and for myself—if my lot be to die for my own land, I am ready: if it be to suffer yet many years for her, I am willing. These vows I repeat, as yesterday, on the days which number my years since my birth."

“ Was yesterday your birth-day ? ”

“ It was. In my own country, I went among the mountains—among the Alps, which as a child I climbed. There I was alone on that day. Here, no Alps are before me, but I go out alone to remember, and to meditate, and to hope; for while my heart beats, I cannot but remember: while there is a world around me, and a spirit within me, I must meditate: while there is a providence to be discerned, and a God to be hearkened to in all these things, I am apt to hope, and I cannot but pray.”

“ Your faith is now your best blessing, and will prove your ample reward,” said Mr. Byerley, “ whatever lot may befall your country and yourself; but tell me, honestly, if those of your countrymen who are without your faith do not look on you as almost a Christian ? ”

“ I own they do; but they know as much less of your gospel than I, as I than you.”

Mary fell into a reverie about what she had heard; and when she listened again, her father and his friend were speaking of the political state of Italy. Having made sure of the facts

that Signor Elvi, so far from excusing the act of suicide, held it to be impious, selfish, and cowardly, she took the first opportunity, after her arrival at home, of communicating her discovery to Selina, who was never again heard to admire, even in the very lowest degrees of comparison, the resolution shown in the act of self-murder.

This was the last day of the Fletchers' visit—the last day of the intercourse which all the girls enjoyed, and which Anna thought she could scarcely live without. She had come to an explanation, and almost an apology, with Selina, for her mirth the preceding evening. She owned that it was very provoking, when inclined to be sad, to see one's dearest friend particularly merry; and she thought she should be more observant of Selina's mood another time. She just hinted, however, that some accommodation from the other party was very possible; and that it might be desirable to meet half way. If Selina had looked a little more cheerful, she might have been more moderate in her laughter. “How was it possible, dear, to be cheerful, when I sup-

posed that Signor Elvi had shot himself?" was, however, an unanswerable question.

Long was the talk this night, when the friends should have been fitting themselves, by sleep, for the fatigues and various emotions of the next day. When the midnight clock told them that the last Sabbath they were to be together was gone, they had too much to say about the way in which they were to remember each other, to close their eyes. It was dawn before they slept. The next morning came the melancholy business of packing, and the disagreeable sight of corded trunks in the hall. Though the dinner was ordered very early, the hours hung heavily ; for no one thought of doing any thing but wandering round the garden, and sitting in the balcony, and bidding farewell to every place.

While Rose, Selina, and Anna were standing idly by the brink of the pond, they saw Mary running nimbly down the steps, and hastening towards them, evidently bringing good news. She had just heard of her father's promise to take them abroad to join their friends, as soon as they should be settled at Tours. Joyful

news indeed ! and well-timed to cheer the parting. Months must pass away before they would meet ; but that there was any certain prospect of meeting was delightful. Mary was older than her companions, and very much wiser in proportion, so that she could look forward with greater ease : she was therefore the happiest of the party ; rather happier than her sister could understand.

Anna's heart smote her when she felt, from time to time, a fear that she should not find her sister all she had found her—a fear that they might be dull together. She loved her father and sister very much ; but she no longer looked forward to her daily occupations, and to daily intercourse with the household, with the pleasure and alacrity which had been habitual to her. This painful feeling, made up of regret and self-reproach, was at its height when Mr. Fletcher's carriage drove from the door. She was so possessed with the idea that Mary would not feel the separation as she did, that she ran away at once to shed her tears in silence. If she had had any thought for any one but herself, she would

have perceived that her sister was also in tears, and that they did not flow the less amply because Anna broke from her, refusing to be comforted. After a while, Anna stole into the room her friends had occupied, for the purpose of feeding her grief with the visible signs of their former presence. Mary was already there, sitting on the chair on which a bandbox had stood to be packed, and twirling on her fingers a rejected piece of string. The sympathy which thus brought them together cheered them both, and they resolutely went the round of the apartment, to gather up every memorial of their departed guests. In a half-opened drawer, they found a note for each—notes which afforded abundance of painful pleasure, and which were immediately destined, by vow, to be kept for ever.

There is something so truly painful in partings, that no length of time, no frequency of the occasion, can reconcile us to them. The sight of the deserted room strikes gloom upon the heart, even if its inhabitant intends to return in a very few days or weeks. We sigh over every memorial we happen to meet with, even if the ab-

sent one is to return presently to claim it. The grief of a really terrible parting is transferred, by association, to the least important ; and every body feels pretty much alike about them all. It is not to be wondered at that Mary and Anna, who were just beginning to taste the pleasures of friendship with new minds, and who were inexperienced in the regrets which attend such connexions, should be really and deeply melancholy during the first hours of separation ; especially as they had the prospect of undergoing something of the same kind the next day, when Signor Elvi was to bid them farewell.

He was now with their father in the study, transacting the business which brought him to A——. He appeared no more to them the whole day, except at tea-time, when he was so busy talking politics that he had no more leisure than Mr. Byerley for taking further notice of the girls than his habitual politeness prompted. The sisters, feeling somewhat forlorn when again left together, sat down, face to face, to talk over the past week ; and they comforted one another as well as they could, till sleep performed the office of comforter better still.

The next afternoon, when the Signor had bestowed on them his last smile, and with foreign politeness and native feeling kissed their hands at parting, they went to their father's study to get rid of their ennui.

Mr. Byerley was, fortunately, in particularly good spirits. Much as he esteemed his late guests, and had on the whole enjoyed their society, he preferred his own quiet study, and the liberty to pursue his daily plans. To be gowned and slippered was quite a luxury; and to shut the door on all the world but his children, gave him a satisfaction which he was not unreasonable enough to expect to see reflected in the faces of his young companions. It was well that he was in a bright mood, for all his patience was needed to-day. Virgil could not be made to utter poetry, or even sense, this afternoon; and Fenelon's French was far less intelligible than Signor Elvi's. Anna's memory furnished her with one provoking rhyme,

“ The rule of three doth puzzle me,”

which was the only product she could obtain

from her sum. Her father took pity on her perplexity, and explained once more what he knew she understood very well. He pointed with his finger to the place where the answer was to be written down, when lo ! a huge tear-drop fell on it. Then came another, and another, till the divisor and the quotient became alike indistinguishable.

“ What is all this about ? ” said her father, making her sit on his knee. “ What makes you so unhappy this afternoon ? ”

Anna had so many reasons to give, that she did not know which to produce first. Before she could find voice to reply, her father’s attention was called away by stifled sobs from the other side of the table.

“ You too, Mary ! Come here, my dear, and tell me what has happened to you both.”

Mary came, and as she was wont, told her father all that she herself knew of what was in her mind ; ending by owning, with a half-smile, that she should not have shed any tears if Anna had not ; but that now she had once begun, she did not know when she should be able to leave off.

Her father, hasty as he was sometimes, was now full of tenderness, though he did not weakly encourage their overflow of melancholy. He said no more about study, but talked to them of the prospect of meeting their friends again, and of much which was to be done in the mean time. He showed that he fully understood the new pleasure of companionship which they had just enjoyed, and that he shared their sympathy with his foreign friend's misfortunes, and their admiration of his conduct under them; but he led them to perceive how wrong it is to allow inactive sympathy to interfere with active duty.

When the tears had disappeared, and smiles came forth again, he sent them to put on their bonnets, that they might have a walk together once more.

As soon as the fresh air blew on her face, Mary's impulse was, as usual, to sing; but crying is a bad preparation for singing, and she was obliged to keep her music till her voice, as well as her spirit, had recovered its tone.

Anna was too much absorbed to observe where her father was leading her, till they entered a

narrow, dark alley, and turned up a broken, winding stair. When they had reached the top, Mr. Byerley desired them to wait outside a door at which he knocked, till he should come to them. When the door was opened from within, the girls obtained a view, for an instant, of a wretched apartment inhabited by a sick man, who was stretched on a low bedstead, without curtains, and furnished only with a rug. Pain and want were visible in the face of the sufferer; and the boy who opened the door likewise appeared half-famished.

“O, papa!” said Mary, when Mr. Byerley joined them again in a few minutes, “who are these poor people?”

“They are foreigners, my dear, in the extreme of distress.”

Anna’s attention was immediately fixed.

“Foreigners, papa? Where do they come from?”

“From Italy. The man is an image-maker, whom you may have seen about the streets with his board. He maintained himself and his son by his ingenuity; and even contrived to put the

boy to school, where he made good progress; but it is all at an end now. The poor man was seized with a rheumatic fever some weeks ago, and when he will be better there is no saying; for no complaint is more tedious. His money is all gone; and they have both parted with all their clothes but what they had on before they applied to any body for assistance. When I first saw them, yesterday, they seemed almost starved."

"Why did you not tell us, papa? We might have done a great deal for them by this time."

"I wished first to learn all the particulars of their story, and at the same time to give them the pleasure of conversing with a countryman; and therefore I took Elvi to see them last night. He is satisfied of the truth of their statements, and will obtain some relief, if possible, from the fund for the relief of distressed foreigners in London. He had nothing else to give, I am sorry to say; but his kindness and his promise have cheered his poor countryman, and done him more good, he says, than medicine. You

see, Anna, we must not bestow all our compassion on Elvi: he is not the most unfortunate of emigrants, hard as is the emigrant's lot."

Anna shook her head. Her father continued.

"Elvi himself said that such a scene as this made him ashamed of dwelling on his own sorrows."

"He does not," exclaimed Anna: "he thinks of every body sooner than himself."

"He does, my dear, to all appearance—to admiration; but I believe he has very severe struggles to undergo when no human eye sees, and none are near to feel with and for him. I will not say that he reproaches himself for this, but he is anxious to bear in mind that others suffer more than himself. 'I am not sleepless,' he says, 'from hunger and pain, like this man. I can see the sun shine and be consoled. I am soothed by friendly words and kind deeds, and my poverty is not real, but only future, since I have clothes and food; but this man tosses on his straw bed through the night, and groans in anguish through the day. He has no bread nor clothes,

nor is any one near to give. His son too is wasting before his eyes; and they have nothing but their faith to make them dare look forward one single day. I must think of them when I am sad.' Elvi is right."

"Certainly, papa," said Mary; "but still I think we cannot judge of a person's griefs by what their condition seems to be. Do not you think some people may feel exile and disappointment more than other people feel sickness and want?"

"I do, my dear. The degree of suffering depends more on the state of the person's mind than on his outward circumstances: a very refined and amiable person may suffer more from the disappointment of his affections and the ruin of his country, than a very stupid and ignorant person from actual want. All these evils are equally real; but there are these differences—that we can understand and estimate the one kind better than the other; and we can always relieve the one, and scarcely ever the other: and of course, our first concern is with that which we can measure and relieve."

"That is, we should think more of this poor

man, and of what we can do for him, than of Signor Elvi, this afternoon. So we will."

"Happily there is no occasion to feel less for Elvi because we can do more for his poor countryman," said her father: "if we are but careful to *do* what we can and what we ought, we may make ourselves sure that our feelings will be right. We are to take care of our actions, and to leave our feelings to take care of themselves."

This doctrine did not quite suit Anna's taste. She made no objection to it in theory; but when she had made sure of the image-man being taken care of by other people, she lapsed into her reveries about patriotism and friendship; or rather about one patriot and one friend.

CHAPTER VII.

London.

INSTEAD of a few months, it was full two years before Mr. Byerley and his daughters set out on their promised journey to the continent. Mr. Fletcher's plans had been changed from time to time, so as to delay the arrival of his family at Tours; and Mr. Byerley was too fond of his home to be persuaded to leave it till the last minute, though every body saw how necessary some change of plan with respect to his daughters was becoming. To this he was not himself totally blind, though he was scarcely sufficiently aware of the danger in which Anna stood of losing all energy of character, all vigour of body as well as of mind, through an unbounded indulgence of the imagination. Mary was generally thought

very romantic; but the few, the very few, who knew her well, never applied the term to her. No weak, no romantic person was ever capable of the silent, perpetual self-denial which Mary practised. No romantic person was ever so entirely devoted as Mary to the welfare of every body about her. It is true she did not make much use of the common rules of common people for judging of herself, still less of others: perhaps she overlooked these inferior rules too much. She thought and she felt on a large scale; and when she had laid hold of a good principle, she made it serve small as well as great occasions, in a way that little minds would have found it difficult to comprehend. Nobody doubted that on great occasions Mary would act nobly; but they supposed her unfit for the purposes of common life: they supposed her

“ too bright and good
For human nature’s daily food.”

They were quite mistaken, as they would soon have found by living in the same house with her.

They would have seen how capable she was of forbearance in trifles, of patience under daily trials, of the careful performance of irksome duties. Her mind was matured so far beyond her years, that a stranger who knew her age and not her circumstances, would have accused her of an affectation of womanishness. It was because she thought and felt like a woman, however, and not because she wished to be thought one, that her manner was that of a woman. It was peculiar, certainly; unlike that of any other girl of her age, which was a disadvantage in some respects; but there was nothing in it which a kind-hearted person would find fault with; it would rather please him. Knowing, as Mary did, that it was probable that their seclusion from female society had left them ignorant of many of the important proprieties of life, she was particularly watchful to obtain all the light she could on a subject of such great practical consequence; and her incessant observation and anxious desire proved excellent teachers. The very nicest sense of propriety grew out of the discipline she imposed on herself, and was now operating rapidly on the faulty

external habits of her early years, and from the desire of doing right—a much better motive than the desire of being pleasing—Mary was becoming elegant and lady-like in her dress and appearance. And how went life with Anna all this time? Alas! very differently. She was delicate in health, and weak in spirits: all the instruction, all the discipline which had so remarkably improved her sister, seemed to fall short of its due effect on her. It taught her what was right, and gave her a tormenting, impotent wish to do it; but to do it, she seemed to have no power; and therefore the wish was tormenting. Her time was ill-employed, she could not tell how or why; for she was very sorry for it, and was always ready to own she was wrong, and profuse in her promises that she would mend; but no amendment followed. She presented the singular phenomenon of a strong understanding, which seemed of no use to any body; of a clear knowledge of what was right, which did not prevent her doing wrong; of a lively sympathy for other people's feelings, which did not prevent her irritating and wounding them perpetually;

of a temper gentle and amiable on the whole, but liable to sudden and unaccountable disturbance. It is needless to say that she was not happy, and that she did much to prevent her sister being so. Her father had many an anxious hour on her account, though he still hoped, that as she was so young, she would conquer the irresolution which seemed the origin of all her faults. He did not sufficiently remember that, owing to the peculiarity of their situation, time had done more than remained to be done in deciding the cast of character of his children. He did not enquire sufficiently into the cause of the irresolution of will, which, if he had so enquired, he would not have been so sanguine in the hope of curing: it proceeded from a premature and excessive exercise of the imagination. Whether Anna would, like Mary, prove herself great on great occasions, nobody could decide; but it was evident to every body that she was not great on small occasions. She met with much allowance on account of her health; but more than one who made this just allowance, felt convinced that her delicacy of health was as much the

effect as the cause of her faulty state of mind.

Nurse Rickham was perhaps as good a judge of her case, as many a one whose education and intercourse with the superior classes of society, might seem to qualify for a more accurate observation and judgment.

“ I am glad, sir,” said she one day to Mr. Byerley, “ that you are going to take the young ladies out to see the world a little, though I am sure I shall count the weeks till they come back again.”

“ Thank you, nurse. I hope they will enjoy themselves; but I shall count the months as anxiously as you. I am not fond of wandering, and I am afraid I shall miss the quiet I have been accustomed to.”

“ But you will have the satisfaction, I hope, sir, of seeing that it does the young ladies good to travel, Miss Anna especially. I am sorry to say so, sir; but it makes my heart ache to see her so different from what she used to be.”

He shook his head, and nurse went on:

“ Miss Mary sings about the house like a

nightingale, for all she is full of care sometimes, as I know; but Miss Anna, who used to be as high-spirited as a child need be, is so downcast now, that no one would think her to be the same."

"What strikes you as the reason, nurse?"

"She seems to me to think too much: I don't pretend to know how much she studies from books, and no doubt you look to that, sir; but she seems to me to be always thinking and thinking; and 'tis that hurts her health, I do believe, more than any thing else. When she comes to our farm, I don't expect or wish that she should play with the children as she did when she was a child herself; but I don't like to see her stand for hours together, looking up at the tree tops as if she was watching the rooks, when it comes out at last that she never saw one of them, nor thought about them at all."

"If any thing came of all this reverie, I should be less uneasy about it; but while she becomes more unfit for common life, I do not perceive that her understanding improves like her sister's. It is time something was done, nurse; and I

hope the experiment has not been delayed too long."

A month was to be spent in London, previous to their leaving England. It was now the gay season in town: the exhibitions were all open: and as the girls had lived in almost entire seclusion, their father wished to embrace the present opportunity of gratifying that love of the fine arts with which he had taken pains to inspire them. They could both draw well, having been well taught and long-practised; but they had never seen any picture-gallery, but one. There was a fine collection at Audley Castle, and there Mary had gazed and studied till she knew every picture by heart, and had copied all the best into her mind, and some few into her portfolio. She had an earnest desire to see other works of her favourite masters, and to become acquainted with the productions of many whom she yet knew only by name. The time too appeared at hand, when they should hear such music as their hearts told them of by anticipation, but as their ears had never heard. The most ancient edifice they had ever seen was the market-cross of

A——, which bore date 1521. No; not the most ancient, for Mary had once been in a cathedral, when she was only four or five years old. She remembered dimly the chill grandeur of the aisles, and the music of the choir, as it swelled from the soft breathings of a single voice, to the pealing harmony which rang again from the roof. She remembered enough to make her long intensely, and to communicate to her sister an equal impatience to see Westminster Abbey. Mr. Byerley had many political connexions in London, but they were not persons with whom he wished to form more than an acquaintance; and as it was necessary that they should hold their time at their own disposal, he refused several invitations to take up an abode at the houses of friends, and requested Signor Elvi to engage lodgings in a favourable situation. He was very happy to receive such a commission, and on the evening when they were expected, awaited their arrival in the apartments, which he was resolved they should not enter without meeting with a welcome.

A doubt had been started, whether or not the

girls should take their maid Susan with them. It seemed probable that in France she would be an incumbrance more than a help; but their father dreaded the effects of their inexperience in the ways of travelling, in the little circumstances of a journey in which he could not help them, and on which its comfort and pleasure so much depended. It was resolved, at last, that she should accompany them to London, and then proceed or not, as might appear desirable at the end of a month. On the appointed morning, therefore, Susan having looked into her young mistresses' drawers, to see that the packing, which was managed in their own very original style, was complete, and that nothing needful was left behind, appeared in her new straw bonnet and shawl, ready to mount the box when the carriage drove up to the door. It was hard to say who looked the most grave and sad—Mr. Byerley, who was whirled away in opposition to his inclinations if not to his will; or Nurse Rickham and the remaining servant, who were left behind, to comfort one another as they best might.

The travelling party reached their lodgings in town in time for a late dinner;—their pretty, convenient apartments, looking out upon such a scene of organized bustle as the girls had formed no idea of. When they had been welcomed by Signor Elvi, and had in turn welcomed him to dinner, when they had followed their civil-spoken hostess to their apartment, and been introduced to all its advantages of prospect, air, quiet, &c. and when they had dismissed fish and fowl, the question arose, what was to be done next? Mary replied, by taking down from the mantel-piece the notes which had awaited them from Mr. B——, the professor of music, and Mr. D——, the drawing-master, who appointed certain days and hours for giving the desired lessons. Mr. B—— was to come the next morning; so Mary lost no time in trying whether the instrument provided by Signor Elvi was in tune. It satisfied her perfectly, and she was then ready to accompany the party in a drive round Regent's Park. It was not the hour for seeing the throng of company with which it is crowded at an earlier period of a fine spring day; but the

splendour of the buildings afforded quite enough interest for the first visit. The wonders of the Colosseum, the Diorama, and the Zoological Gardens, were reserved for another day; and before it grew dark, the party were glad to return to tea and to bed. They set down Signor Elvi at his lodgings, having agreed upon the time which should be devoted to their lessons with him.

At breakfast the next morning, the girls heard with consternation, that their father was going out immediately on business, and would be absent for some hours.

“But, papa, Mr. B—— is coming at eleven o’clock, to give me my music lesson.”

“Well, my dear, what of that? you do not think I can assist your music, do you?”

“And Mrs. Boyer, and the Nicholsons, will most likely call this morning,” said Anna; “and you know we are quite strangers to them.”

“They will not be strangers when they have been here five minutes; and if they were, I do not know what you should be afraid of, or how I could be of any use to you.”

So saying, and knowing that his daughters might reasonably remonstrate further, he pushed away his cup and saucer, nodded, and left them.

“What are we to do? How very awkward!” exclaimed Mary. “Let us keep together, Anna: stay in the room when Mr. B—— comes.”

“Certainly, unless there should be company in the back drawing-room. Happily, we shall both draw; so it will not signify so much if papa should be out when Mr. D—— comes.”

It happened, as usual, that Anna forgot her promise. The clock struck eleven, and Mr. B—— made his appearance when Mary was alone. She was afraid of him at first sight, for he was so stiffened, so be-collared and be-curved, as to be unlike any body she had ever seen. She thought it would be foolish to ring for her sister, though she had now little hope of seeing her in the course of the lesson. She therefore explained that her father had been obliged to go out early, and volunteered all the necessary information about her musical studies thus far. She did not play her best, when called upon, and was, at first, deterred by her master's pompous

manner, from asking many things which she wished to know. By degrees, however, her habitual interest in her music overcame her uncomfortable feelings, and she played her part of a duet with so much spirit, that Mr. B——'s formality gradually gave way, and he began to speak less like an oracle, and to tap his snuff-box less incessantly. When the lesson was about half over, Mary heard a rapping at the door, and the admittance of company into the back drawing-room. She supposed that Anna had received them; and when Mr. B—— had made his three bows in acknowledgment of her single curtsy, she ran up stairs for her gloves, that she might join her sister and their guests. To her surprise, she found Anna sitting at the foot of the bed, with a book in her hand.

“Why, Anna, don't you know there is somebody in the drawing-room?”

“Yes, I am going directly,” said Anna, rising, and showing that her gown was unfastened; “I am only going to change my gown, and I will come directly.”

Mary rang for Susan, and entreating her sister

to follow with all speed, ran down to apologize to Mr. and Mrs. Nicholson for her father's absence and her own delay. They staid long, but Anna came not; and the arrival of the drawing-master sent them away without having seen her. When again hunted up, she was found preparing her drawing-board, which ought to have been ready before.

“This will never do,” thought Mary: “I must ask papa not to go out again at this time of day.”

Anna woke up at the sight of her master's beautiful portfolio, and appeared to have enjoyed her lesson so much, that Mary had not the heart to reproach her for her desertion in the morning. She forgot it herself when the carriage came to the door, and their father stepped in after them to take them to the Abbey.

There they remained for hours. They wandered silently through the intricacies of the side chapels, and retired from the crowd of visitors into the solemn stillness of Henry the Seventh's chapel. There was no motion but the waving of the ancient banners of the knights; no sound

but the softest melody of the organ ; no sunshine but the one gleam which fell athwart the deep arch from the high windows. The partial gloom, the grandeur, the silence, thrilled the very souls of the strangers, and hushed their voices. After they had gone the round of the edifice, and spent a long hour in the Poets' Corner, they, with one consent, returned to the chapel, that they might bear away with them the impression they most wished to preserve.

“ Where next, my dears ? ” said Mr. Byerley, as they emerged into the warm sunshine.

“ Is not this enough for to-day ? ” said Mary : “ I am afraid we should enjoy nothing after it.”

“ Oh ! let us get away from shops and people,” said Anna, looking as if she were going to cry : “ I cannot bear them to-day.”

“ No work of art will do after what we have seen,” said their father ; “ but you shall see what will refresh instead of disgusting you.”

He gave orders for a drive over Hampstead Heath ; and the freshness and natural beauty which they found there, softened without im-

pairing the impressions which they had previously received.

They were alone in the evening; and after tea they sat down quietly to talk. Mary would have wished to practise, and Anna to read; but their father looked round him with a sigh, as if regretting his own study. Mary therefore gave him a description of her music-lesson and of Mr. B——, entreating him to be at home the next time her master should come.

“That is as it may happen, Mary: I will take you to-morrow where you will learn what I was about this morning, and then you will not be sorry that I left you to take care of each other.”

“I cannot let you suppose that we did that,” said Anna, blushing: “I left Mary to manage every thing; but I will be more ready to-morrow.”

“Will you?” said her father: “how often have you promised this, Anna? and have you ever kept your promise? You are not aware how you deceive yourself.”

“You have not told us,” said Mary, after a

painful pause, "where you are going to take us to-morrow."

"You have never heard good public speaking——"

"O yes, papa! we heard you speak at Hertford, about reform in parliament."

"You call that good public speaking, do you?" said Mr. Byerley, laughing: "you will find your notions a little exalted by what you will hear to-morrow. The meeting is to be at Freemasons' Hall; and B——, and W——, and P——, will speak; and the subject is——"

"Not politics, I do hope," said Anna.

"The subject is political, but it involves much besides politics, or I should not think of taking you there, my little hater of politics. It cannot be said of us, Anna, 'like father like child:' you will feel differently, when you grow older and wiser."

"If she does not," said Mary, laughing, "she and I shall lay all the blame on you. But I doubt whether we shall ever think, as you wish we should, that it is necessary or desirable for a

woman to care about what seems to be no concern of hers."

"I have not adopted the right method, I believe, to interest you in what interests me so much," said Mr. Byerley: "I dare say you are quite tired of hearing of public meetings, and petitions, and of reform in parliament, at the very name of which I observe you sigh. I see you never look at a newspaper, except to discover notices of new music or books; but this is all because you do not know the importance of the subjects you despise."

"But," said Anna, "I thought every body disliked female politicians. I remember your looking very much disgusted when you heard how the Blakeleys bestirred themselves in Mr. Harmer's election; how Mrs. Blakeley helped to canvass for him; and how her daughters dropped a laurel crown by a red ribbon on his head, when he was chaired. They stood on a scaffolding, you know, where every body in the marketplace could see them; and I remember your saying, that if your daughters had done it, you should have wished the scaffolding to fall

in with them before the member's chair came round."

"True, Anna, I remember saying so; and my feeling is much the same now, though I would not express it so extravagantly. I know few things more disgusting, than to see women pushing forwards in matters where they have no business, and inflaming themselves with party spirit. But all this has nothing to do with such an interest in the welfare of your country and your race as I wish to awaken in you. I think, Mary, you liked the chapter of the 'Wealth of Nations,' which you read to me lately."

"On Bounties, and Restraints on Importation; yes, I liked it particularly, and mean to read more, if I may."

"Well, that very question of Free Trade is one of the most important that our politicians are busy about now."

"But what have *we* to do with it?" persisted Anna.

"As much as any body who cares for the condition of the labouring classes, to say nothing of

the state of all the farmers and merchants in the kingdom. Is it not worth knowing why they are sometimes prosperous, and sometimes distressed? Would not you like to be able to know whether their prospects will probably improve or grow worse?"

"Is this learned by studying the question of Free Trade?"

"It cannot be learned by other means, at any rate."

"But is it not better to help the poor people about us, than to learn what is likely to happen to poor people in general?" asked Anna.

"It certainly would be, if we could not do both; but I am firmly convinced that benevolent persons, women as well as men, may do more good by giving their poorer neighbours right notions about their own interests, than even by bestowing money or clothes. Do you remember the account Mr. Bland gave us of the *turn out* at Manchester?"

"Yes; I shall never forget it."

"Well, however much good was done by the benevolent persons who gave soup and blankets

to the starving weavers, Mr. Bland did more good than all the other people together, by proving to those who struck for wages that they were hastening their own ruin. His wife helped him very much by her influence among the weavers' wives; and she could not have done this if she had known nothing of the *politics* of the case. We hear too of the occasional destruction of machinery in the manufacturing districts; and this mischief will not cease till the people are taught that they injure their own interests by such violence. Why should not ladies help to teach this as well as other truths? and how should they teach it, unless they understand the matter well themselves?"

"Is there any thing about that in the 'Wealth of Nations,' papa?"

"Yes; and you shall read it. There are other political subjects, on which there is no occasion to bid you feel an interest."

Anna looked at Mary in unbelief.

"Nobody is more indignant at slavery than you are, Anna."

Anna's colour rose at the mention of slavery.

“ But that has nothing to do with parliamentary reform, and those tiresome subjects, papa.”

“ More than you are aware of, my dear; or than I can explain at present: but however closely connected with the interests of religion and humanity, it is still a political subject, as you will learn to-morrow; for the object of the meeting I am to take you to, is to petition for the abolition of colonial slavery. Perhaps, when there, you may wish that you knew something of the history and present state of the question, which would enable you to enter into much which will now be lost upon you.”

“ Will you, can you tell us about it now?” said both the girls, eagerly.

Mr. Byerley began from the point to which he knew their study of history had led them, and gave them a clear account of the struggles, successes, and reverses, which the great slavery question had passed through up to the present day. For the first time, Anna felt an interest about philanthropists and statesmen, of whose names she had long been weary, while she knew

nothing of them beyond their names. She was unwilling to go to bed when ten o'clock struck.

"Why, I thought bed had been better than politics, at any time," said her father.

"It depends upon what the politics are," said Anna, laughing: "I should have been asleep over the corn laws an hour ago."

"We will try some night," said her father.

"Let it be in the 'Wealth of Nations,' then," said Mary.

"Or in a more entertaining book still," added her father: "you like books of travels, Anna."

Anna stared.

"They will give us excellent information on the corn question; particularly one about a family of back settlers in America, and another about the Japan islands."

Anna was obliged to carry away this riddle unsolved: she determined to look into Johnson's Dictionary for the word *politics* on the first opportunity.

CHAPTER VIII.

Profitable Pleasure.

SIGNOR ELVI breakfasted with Mr. Byerley the next morning, as the girls were to receive their Italian lesson before they attended the meeting. They understood the grammar of the language well, and had read many good Italian authors. Their purpose in learning of Signor Elvi was to improve their pronunciation, and to accustom themselves to converse in his language. He brought with him a volume of Alfieri, thinking that nothing could afford a better preparation for the speeches they were going to hear. There was no opportunity for Anna to fall into a reverie. Each of the three took a character of a tragedy, and the dialogue was kept up briskly, 'libertà, libertà,' being still the theme. When Mr. Byerley looked up from his newspaper, he was

amused to see the eagerness of each—his friend declaiming with all his natural volubility, and his pupils, scarcely able to keep up with him, yet catching the spirit of the sentiment, and charmed with the grandeur of the expression. They were taken by surprise when the carriage drove to the door, and they found it was half-past ten o'clock. While they hastened to put on their bonnets, their father remarked to his friend, that they seemed to have enjoyed their lesson.

“ Ah, yes! and I also; for they have a mind and soul for what they do. It is as great a pleasure to me to teach such as they, as it is a toil with some others of my pupils. There will be no need to take strong coffee before sitting down with your daughters.”

“ Strong coffee!”

“ Yes; you will wonder, perhaps, but you have no idea how great is the drudgery to a teacher, how trying it is to his nerves, to teach those who have no mind, or who will not use it; who are for ever careless about necessary rules, and whom there is no chance of leading on be-

yond the rules. I have now one pupil, I might say several, but I will instance one, who writes exercises, month after month, and makes as many gross mistakes now as at first; and all my efforts to make her think and observe are in vain; and so we shall go on till she thinks herself too old to be taught, or fancies she has learned enough because she is grown up, and all this time she will never read Alfieri."

"I was afraid you might find such a kind of pupil in Anna."

"No; Miss Anna is sometimes absent, but she is so from the fulness, not from the emptiness of her mind. Not that I would excuse the habit, for it is very fatal to improvement at her age."

"Show her that you think so; have no merey on her if she does not attend to you as she ought."

"I will try," said the Signor, laughing, "how severe I can be, if there should be reason for complaint."

The scene of the meeting was one of great animation. The place was nearly full when our party arrived, and the assemblage was gayer and

more various than any the girls had ever seen. There were parties of fashionably dressed ladies, seated beside families of Friends in their neat white shawls and drab bonnets. Members of parliament, country gentlemen, and city merchants, met on the hustings, and shook hands, and consulted, and handed papers about, and looked full of business and cheerfulness. Mr. Byerley longed to be among them; and his daughters remarked, as soon as they entered, how well he seemed to be known there. He introduced his daughters to the family of one of his friends, who made room for them on their bench, and requested Mr. Byerley to leave them under their care, as they knew he was wanted on the hustings. The girls found so much to observe, that they could scarcely keep up a conversation with their new acquaintances, and had almost forgotten the object of the meeting in the bustle of the preparation. They watched their father's progress through the crowd, as he turned to one, made a sign to another, was heartily welcomed by a third, and was held by the button by a fourth.

“Your father will speak, I suppose,” said Miss R—— to Mary.

“I believe not; at least, I heard nothing of his having such an intention.”

“Oh! he certainly will. Look! Mr. B—— is putting one of the resolutions into his hand.”

“Is that Mr. B——?” exclaimed Mary, starting from her seat. “Anna, that is Mr. B—— that papa is talking to.”

“Hush! you must sit down,” said Miss R——, laughing: “you must come and see us some day, and we will introduce you to him, if you wish it.”

“Wish it!” thought Mary: “to hear him speak once in public and once in private, will give us enough to think about till we go to France. I do believe papa will speak,” she continued aloud: “he is sitting down among the speakers, to the left of the chair.”

“Certainly,” replied Miss R——: “my father says, that none of the movers of this meeting have been more active than Mr. Byerley.”

At length the speakers in posse made room for the noble chairman, and installed him in the

usual form ; and the business of the day began. For the first half hour, every thing went on much as Anna and Mary had been enabled to anticipate, from their having once attended a public meeting. The chairman began with common-places, and the first speakers were not yet warmed, and had the fear of the audience before their eyes : they stopped for words now and then, and said nothing which had not often been said before ; but every good sentiment they uttered, was well received by the audience, and a glow of feeling began to spread through the place, and to prepare the way for the mighty movers of the heart who were to follow. When Mr. B—— rose, Mary forgot to observe, as she had intended, the features and lines of his countenance, and the peculiarity of the little action he used : the harshness of his voice even was soon forgotten, and her whole soul was at the mercy of his deep and varied thoughts, and his vivid, passionate, burning words. If slavery had before appeared to her the most crying abomination which subsists on the earth, she now felt astonished that the earth remained with such

an abomination upon it; she felt at one moment ashamed, at the next proud of her race, according as she heard of the crimes of slave-holders, or of the virtuous efforts of our philanthropists at home. She felt, for the first time in her life, the noble excitement of sharing with a multitude in successive and strong emotions—emotions which are not appropriate to the public services of religion, but which are not therefore inconsistent with their spirit. She was sorry when Mr. B—— gave place to a speaker of a totally different stamp; but the soft, persuasive eloquence of the next friend of the slave who spoke, soon engrossed her again. She was so intent on his words, that she gave no heed when her arm was twice touched by the lady who sat next her; when, at the third hint, she turned, she was shocked to see that Anna was sobbing and trembling violently, and that every body near was observing her. The place was so full, that it was nearly impossible for any one to get out; and besides, she was unwilling, in the extreme, to break up the party who had kindly taken her and her sister under their protection. There was

no overpowering heat, and she knew Anna well enough to be assured that this was only a paroxysm which she had herself excited, or which she might at least have checked. She ventured therefore on speaking very decidedly to her, though in a voice which could not be overheard. She told her that she could not think of disturbing Mrs. R—— and her family; gave her the vinaigrette she carried, and advised her to control her feelings, and fix her attention on the speaker as soon as she could, while she would sit so as to screen her from observation as much as possible. Anna thought all this very bad treatment of such delicate feelings as hers; but her indignation helped to restore her, which was the object most to be desired. Her sobs soon ceased; and if not ashamed at having been so full of herself, and so troublesome to others, she at least was quiet for the rest of the time.

Mr. Byerley spoke, briefly and plainly. He stated a few facts, and explained his own sentiments on the resolution he held, and then made way for those whom he believed more worthy of the attention of the meeting. There was nothing

to be ashamed of in the part he took, and little to be proud of besides the propriety of his feelings, and the modesty which led him to be satisfied with being useful behind the scenes, rather than brilliant on the stage.

Mary had for some time been annoyed by the disturbance of persons going out—why so soon she could not conceive—when her own party rose also. Miss R—— tapped her on the shoulder, and laughingly asked if she could listen for a moment. Mary turned.

“Your father will be detained till the meeting is over; but if you will go out with us, my brother will see you into your carriage, which must have been waiting some time. You must be quite faint with weariness and hunger.”

“No, indeed,” said Mary and Anna; “we cannot go till it is over, thank you. We shall not mind sitting here till papa comes.”

“Do you know what o’clock it is? It is just five.”

“Is it possible! But we do not mind that: we had rather stay, thank you.”

So with many acknowledgments to Mrs. R——

for her protection, they persisted in remaining by themselves. They looked round for Signor Elvi, but he too was gone. It was not long, however, before the vote of thanks to the chairman was passed, and the meeting broke up. Their father came to give them each an arm, took them to the carriage, nodding to this side and that as he went, and hastened them home, being sure, as he said, that they must be quite exhausted. No such thing. They found, when dinner was before them, that they were very hungry ; but they never ceased talking of what they had heard, and were sanguine as to the success of a petition which had been prepared and advocated by such wise heads and warm hearts.

After dinner, Mary looked at her piano, remembering that much practice was required in preparation for her next lesson. It was with some dismay that she heard from her father that he had made an engagement for them for the evening. What a bustling life was theirs just now ! The carriage was to be at the door at nine. The girls met to dress while their father

rested on the sofa, and Mary afterwards practised till it was time to go.

“We shall not stay long,” said Mr. Byerley, as he led his daughters up the staircase at Mr. Nicholson’s, where he met a larger company than he expected : “an hour will be as much as we shall wish for.”

So thought his daughters, who had not much inclination to enter a crowd of strangers. They found it pleasanter, however, than they expected. Mrs. Nicholson introduced them to some young ladies who were looking over fine prints, and who seemed to understand drawing. There was some good music ; and, what was still better, Signor Elvi was there. He soon made his way to them, and entertained them, as usual, with his lively and refined conversation. Anna overheard him tell Mrs. Nicholson that Mary sang and played very well, and she hoped that an opportunity would offer for her sister’s talents being called out. Anna had as little vanity on her own account as most girls ; but she was very proud of Mary. This was rather an annoyance to Mary, who would have been better pleased if

Anna had taken less pains to tell how well her sister could play and sing, and more to contribute to her daily comfort. In due time, Mrs. Nicholson approached with a request that Mary would take her seat at the piano. Mary gently but decidedly declined. "But why? But why?" exclaimed her sister and her friend. Mary gave her reasons; viz. that she had not been accustomed to sing in so large a company, and that the attempt would give no pleasure to any body. She would, with pleasure, sing to Mrs. Nicholson as long as she pleased, in a more private way; but begged to be excused this night. Mrs. Nicholson was politely sorry; Anna muttered, "Provoking!" the Signor whispered "Right, quite right."

Their engagements seemed still to multiply as the number of their acquaintance increased. Exhibitions in the morning, concerts in the evening, a day at Richmond and Hampton Court; a dinner-party here, an evening-party there, were fixed; and they returned home with their heads in a whirl.

"Light your candles, my dears; and to rest

as soon as possible," said Mr. Byerley, holding up his watch, whose hands pointed to midnight.

"Nay, papa, just five minutes," said Mary, drawing a chair beside him. "I like to call back old thoughts before we say good-night. If I left you with my head full of all we have seen and heard, I could not sleep."

"Our present way of life will do you no harm while you preserve this feeling," replied her father. "But tell me, are you not surprised at my making so many engagements for you?"

"Not so much as other people," said Anna; "because we know that it is for our good, and not to gratify your own taste. Mrs. Nicholson looked quite surprised at your making every thing so easy about Richmond; but I told her that it was because we had never seen it."

"It certainly is not the pleasantest thing in the world to me to hurry from one engagement to another, so that I cannot call an hour my own; nor would it be pleasant to you, for any length of time. But our stay in London is short; and I wish to show you, wherever you go, the different kinds of life that people lead, that you

may be able, in case of losing my guidance, to make a wise choice, which you could scarcely do if you knew of no other method of employing your days than that to which you have been accustomed, and which would no longer be suitable to your altered circumstances. In case of my death, you would live in rather a gay circle in London; and my object is to show you how your best occupations may be reconciled with the gratifications of taste, while they are wholly incompatible with mere dissipation."

"I think," said Mary, "that the pleasures of to-day, of the morning especially, may and ought to give a new spring to our best feelings and wishes."

"And yesterday's too," added Anna. "I have felt like a different person since I saw Westminster Abbey."

"I hope you will find the same influence from the natural beauties of Richmond, and the delights of the Dulwich gallery; ever remembering that moderation is especially necessary in pleasures of taste. If you went so often from one of these places to the other as to leave no

interval for the serious business of life, there would soon be an end alike of enjoyment and improvement. It is because I trust these pleasures will furnish you with serious occupation, that I offer them to you. If I thought they would afford you merely subjects for talk, and reverie, and drawing, I would carry you away from them all to-morrow."

"Thought and feeling—deep study—purified tastes: these ought to be ministered to by innocent pleasures," said Mary, thoughtfully.

"No pleasures can be innocent which do not thus minister," observed her father; "and I trust, my dears, that you will so rouse your faculties, as to make the most of your present opportunities." Here he addressed Anna particularly. "Observe keenly, and lay yourself open to the full relish of every beautiful object which is presented to you; and refer it perpetually to your best ideas and feelings. So, in some far distant place or time, in the midst of the sea, or after the lapse of years, alone among strangers, or on a sick bed, the bright and beautiful objects which are now new to you, will come, like fami-

liar friends, to cheer you, and help your gratitude for the blessings which have strewed your path of life."

After a pause, Mary asked if it could be supposed that many persons cultivated their tastes with such an object as this.

"I trust that many do," was the reply; "but we must not suppose that the greater number who spend their lives in flitting from pleasure to pleasure, have any genuine taste to cultivate. The influence of all objects depends mainly upon the sort of mind which is exposed to it; and there may be as wide a difference in the innocence of purpose of two persons who enter the Dulwich gallery at the same moment, as between the state of mind of the Christian who enters a church to worship, and the wretch who goes to scoff. The one may carry away from this sanctuary of taste, a mind softened and refreshed; while the other is burdened with an additional account of time wasted, and levity encouraged. And now, whether these thoughts be old or new to you, they are such as you may carry into private. So good night, and quiet rest to you."

While Anna listened to her father it was ever her full intention to adopt the principles to the truth of which she assented ; but her power over her own thoughts was too far gone to be easily regained. Instead of keenly observing the new objects which were placed before her, she was commonly lost in dreams which might just as well have been dreamed at A——. The advantages which she knew she could only enjoy for a few weeks were neglected, through the same pernicious habit. She sat for hours with her pencil in her hand, and her drawing-board before her, without putting in a stroke ; and she commonly spent the hour when Signor Elvi was with them in pondering his fate, while he himself was enjoying the facility with which he could impress her sister's more healthful mind. She carried away from every new scene feeble impressions, old ideas, and useless or morbid feelings ; and when the last day of their stay in London had arrived, she might have seen, if she had been disposed to observe, that her father looked at her with grief in his countenance ; and that when Signor Elvi returned her mournful farewell,

there was more of compassion than respect in his words and manner. Dead as she was to external things, she could not but feel that she was and must be regarded a useless thing.

Mary had arranged with her father the plan for their voyage and abode abroad : Mary had received and dismissed their various masters : Mary had made their acknowledgments to their many kind friends who had noticed and assisted them. As to their musical accomplishments, every body knew that no comparison could be drawn ; but Mary's portfolio was that to which the drawing-master referred Mr. Byerley with pride and satisfaction ; and with her did their foreign friend converse, in his own language, upon the subjects nearest his heart. This was too mortifying to be borne with patience ; and in the midst of all her other business, Mary was obliged to try to soothe her sister's pettish temper, and to conceal its infirmities, if possible, from her father. To do this entirely was, however, impossible.

“ I know how much you are engaged,” said he, on the morning when they were to depart ;

but I have omitted one thing which must be done, though I cannot do it myself. Which of you will write a letter of business for me?"

"Oh! the woman of business, to be sure," said Anna, waving her hand at Mary. "When you have a letter of a different sort—to Signor Elvi for instance—to be written, let me do it; but I defer to Mary in matters of business."

"If Mary undertake the task of writing to my bailiff, she shall have the pleasure of writing to my friend."

"She will not thank you for it, sir."

"She will, and Signor Elvi too. He knows what precious qualities are necessary to constitute what you call a woman of business; and that such qualities make the most faithful and the tenderest friend."

Anna looked contemptuous.

"I should be pleased with your humility in deferring to your sister, if I did not see that you despise the qualities you disclaim. I hope you will meet with such experience as shall make you wiser and more amiable."

"My dear sir, I am in no wise inclined to

quarrel with Mary for her superior cleverness. She is quite welcome to it. I am content with my lot—

‘ The world forgetting, by the world forgot.’

Yes ; I have no particular desire to be remembered by your bailiff or your lawyer, even for writing about leases as well as if I had been a very Nerissa—a lawyer’s clerk.”

“ If you go on forgetting as you have done latterly, you will soon be forgotten, to your heart’s content. You will be forgotten when Elvi sits by his wife’s side, and tells his children of his faithful English friends. You will be forgotten when your father stretches out his hand from his death-bed to give his last blessing—or remembered in such a manner that you will pray to be forgotten.”

“ O papa !” cried Mary, imploringly. Anna burst into tears.

“ You would ask for forgiveness, I see,” said her father, laying his hand on her shoulder. “ Your sister forgives you, as she is in the

hourly habit of doing ; and so do I. Do not be in too great a hurry to forgive yourself."

Anna was in despair as he left the room ; but before he returned, she had apparently lost all remembrance of his rebuke and of its cause.

CHAPTER IX.

The Convent.

IT was Mr. Byerley's wish to avoid Paris on his way into Touraine, as it had been agreed with the Fletchers that they should spend three months there together, on their return to England. Mr. Byerley therefore took a passage in a Rochelle packet, for himself, his daughters, and their maid, whom they could not resolve to leave behind. Mr. Byerley had political friends in every country, and especially many in France, who were discontented with the government, as most sensible and upright men at that time were. They were not engaged in any plots or underhand doings, but were glad to cultivate a correspondence with the friends of freedom, and to learn every thing which such men as Mr. Byerley

could communicate respecting the best institutions of a more favoured country. With some of these friends Mr. Byerley had planned a meeting; and his dislike of leaving his own country was softened by the hope of doing something abroad to forward his favourite objects. His daughters were aware of this, and would have dreaded the political discussions which they knew must take place, if they had not hoped to find a refuge with Mrs. Fletcher and her daughters, from company which at home they could not have escaped. It was not till their father took out the packet of letters with which he was charged, while sitting on deck, the day they sailed, that the girls were aware how numerous were his connexions abroad.

“If you were sinking, papa, which would you try hardest to save, me or those letters?” said Anna, laughing.

“If I could burn the letters first, I would save you, my dear; but I should not like the risk of their floating.”

“Then I wish they were at the bottom of the sea,” said Mary. “I am afraid of them.”

“ There is no occasion, Mary. There is nothing in them that I should hesitate to show you ; but they are too good to fall into hands which might do harm to the writers. There is no treason, privy conspiracy, or rebellion in them : nothing more than an Englishman may write and put in the newspaper any day if he chooses.”

Mary was satisfied.

The voyage was very pleasant to all the party but Susan, who was the only one who suffered much from sickness. There were no cabin-passengers but two or three French merchants, who, being known to each other, readily took the hint given by Mr. Byerley's somewhat unsociable manners, that he wished for no other intercourse than that of his daughters. The girls had seen so little of their father during their late bustling life, that they enjoyed the present opportunity of being always together. They had never before been at sea, and no minds could be better prepared to feel the delicious pleasures of the first short, favourable voyage. All day they were on deck, talking, singing—sometimes reading, but suffer-

ing no new object to pass unnoticed. Late at night, they were still leaning over the vessel's side, no longer singing, for fear of disturbing those who were gone to rest, but talking in low voices of things high and deep, far and near. When the moon shone, they traced her silvery path over the billows: when obscured, they looked with awe on the tossing surface round them, and felt their solitude on the watery waste. In a very short time, Anna's imagination, which had received a new direction from the new scene in which she was placed, returned to its accustomed trains of images, and she saw little and heard nothing of what passed near her; while Mary, who (whatever Anna might think) possessed the same faculty in much greater strength and perfection, learned and experienced something new every hour. There was not a passing cloud in the sky, or a purple shadow on the waters, not a drifting weed or a sprinkling of foam which escaped her glance, or failed to awaken some thought or feeling. She was the first to mark the rising star, and to understand the intimation that some far-distant beacon might be

discerned. Yet she never forgot the pleasure of others while experiencing her own. When Anna raised her head and saw how her sister pointed out to Susan such objects as she could understand, she owned it was very well for poor Susan that somebody tried to amuse her, but wondered how it was possible under such a moon, amidst such a scene, to let down the tone of feeling so far as to talk with a servant. The cabin was surely the place to talk to Susan. She forgot how

“ the sun is fixed,
And the infinite magnificence of heaven
Within the reach of every human eye ;
The sleepless Ocean murmurs for all ears.”

Mary remembered this, and was not so presumptuous as to pretend to an aristocracy of mind in scenes where the Creator ordained that there should be none. Their father knew their different feelings by their different conduct. “ My dear Anna,” said he, “ if you want to enjoy your aristocracy, go down to the cabin. That is the only place where there is room for it.” Anna took him at his word ; not because she

assented to what he said, but because, having been once disturbed, she thought she could resume her reverie best in her berth. Susan, who was always glad of something to do, ran to assist her; and Mary returned to her father's side.

It will be easily supposed that Anna's thoughts were much with her friend Selina, all this time. Every circumstance of their meeting had been often planned and anticipated, and had been so exalted in her imagination, that the reality fell somewhat short of her expectation. Yet it would have satisfied any reasonable person. The journey from Rochelle was prosperous throughout, and the rich province of Touraine presented many pleasures and much prospect of future enjoyment to our travellers. The approach to the fine city of Tours charmed them, animated as they were with the expectation of presently meeting the friends they sought. They bowled along the wide, straight road, planted like an avenue, and leading to the eminence on which stood the city; crowning with its picturesque buildings the green slopes which descended to the ample river. The sun was just setting, and

its golden light gleamed through the arches of the magnificent bridge, and poured in a flood of radiance through the stems of the trees. The pleasure was enhanced, especially to Mr. Byerley, by the expectation of seeing English faces, and receiving an English welcome in a foreign land. As the clatter of their horses' hoofs resounded between the rows of high houses, he believed that, though so far from home, listening ears were watching their approach, and friendly hearts were beating with expectation. He was not mistaken. The moment the carriage stopped Mr. Fletcher appeared at the door of his house, and glancing eyes and smiling faces flitted past the windows. Then followed the greetings which filled many hearts with perfect pleasure—every heart but Anna's; and she could have given no better reason for the passing cloud that came over her spirits, than that there was rather too much joy to be quite consistent with the tenderness of sympathy.

The evening was passed, as the first evenings of meeting generally are, in talking of a multitude of unconnected and unimportant things.

Subjects of a deeper interest are naturally deferred till the mind and heart are more tranquil—till there is time and opportunity for full and uninterrupted communication. Opportunity was found, however, for mutual congratulation among the parents upon the apparent improvement of their children. Rose and Selina were grown into fine young women; and Mrs. Fletcher was amazed at the change of manners and appearance in her young friends—Mary especially—which she had believed could be only effected by their residence abroad.

“Somebody has taken my task out of my hands,” said she: “I am afraid there is nothing left for me to do.”

“More than you are prepared for, I am afraid,” replied Mr. Byerley. “But I will not turn informer against my children. I will leave it to your judgment (a better judgment in many respects than mine) to discover whatever deficiency or excess there may be.”

“I know what that word ‘excess’ means,” replied Mrs. Fletcher, smiling: “by and bye we will resume our old argument upon it.”

The next day, in the course of communication between the young people respecting their various occupations and pursuits, it appeared that Rose and Selina had frequently visited a convent in their neighbourhood, and were well acquainted with the abbess and some of the nuns. Mary and Anna were equally anxious to see the interior of a convent, and to converse with persons who had had a fair experience of a monastic life. It was settled that they should be gratified that very day. Mary began to pour out questions respecting the nuns; but her father, smiling, forbade Rose Fletcher to answer any of them, as he wished that Mary should form her own judgment, unbiassed, of what she should see and hear; observing that he was aware Mary had some romantic notions about a monastic life.

Mary hoped her notions were not romantic now; for as she had grown up, she had learned more of the nature of religion than she knew when she longed, in her childhood, to be a nun.

“Had she never, since her childhood, longed to be a nun?” her father enquired.

Mary blushed, and owned that, notwithstanding

ing her knowledge that the duties of Christians lie in society, and that the purest affections of the heart—the devotional feelings themselves—must languish in a life of perfect exclusion, she had never yet been able to divest a monastic life, in idea, of peculiar purity and peace. She would not, even if she were a catholic, and free from family ties, become a nun; but she still felt a kind and degree of respect for religious devotees, which she felt for none besides. Anna and Selina nodded assent; the rest of the party smiled; but Mrs. Fletcher said she believed all thoughtful young people felt like Mary.

“Do you remember Felicia Haggerston?” enquired Mr. Byerley.

“Oh! yes, papa; I always think of her when nuns are mentioned: it is a very useful case to know of.”

“Who is Felicia Haggerston?” enquired Mrs. Fletcher.

“A young lady of a high catholic family, whose character was oddly made up of devotion and family pride. Her mother was left in poor circumstances, with this one daughter and seve-

ral sons. It became necessary for Felicia to relieve her mother of the burden of her maintenance. She might have been happily placed as a governess; but a fit of devotion came in the way of her mother's wishes, and Felicia took the vows in a convent abroad."

"Had she never thought of being a nun before her friends thought of her being a governess?"

"Never; and it appears equally strange that she should mistake her motive for one of pure piety, and that her mother should object to her choice, believing, as she professes to do, in common with all catholics, that devotees are sure of heaven."

"There is always," said Mrs. Fletcher, "a hope that, though they do live in the world, they may reach heaven; and one cannot wonder that a widowed mother should rest on this hope, rather than be severed for life from an only daughter. But what has become of Felicia?"

"I do not know," said Mary: "I saw Mrs. Haggerston in London, and she did not look happy; so that I dared not make any particular

enquiries. But I am afraid Felicia's was not a mind fitted to be quite happy in a convent."

"What sort of mind is?" said Mr. Fletcher.

"I should think a really humble, benevolent heart, might find much ease and many blessings in the best kind of convent-life; not in those where the discipline is very severe, and the whole time must be passed in devotion or idleness; but where the rich, and the poor, and the young, are taken care of, and the hands, as well as the lips, are allowed to praise God and bless mankind."

"Are you aware that it is more difficult to be humble and benevolent where the sole business of life is to be so, than in the world, where there is a greater variety of objects?"

Mary looked doubtful.

"It is one of the clearest possible proofs," continued Mr. Fletcher, "that God designed man for a social state—that in all very small communities separated from the world, envy and pride have ever subsisted, and that utter selfishness is the consequence of entire seclusion."

The girls would not readily believe this in its

full extent: they were aware that the intellect must be weakened by unsocial habits, and that, therefore, it was impossible for the best homage of the heart and mind to ascend from monastic retreats; but they could scarcely imagine any scope for pride or envy in a state of such perfect equality; and as for selfishness, how could it consist with perpetual self-mortification?"

"Of the first case you shall judge from your own observation by and bye," said Mr. Fletcher; "and as for the other, you need only read the records which remain of some of the most sainted anchorites to be convinced. But, tell me now, what is your notion of the life of a nun; what picture have you in your mind's eye of one day of a convent life?"

"The having one's time and one's cell to oneself," said Anna, "is a pleasant idea. The sun shining in through a high window, and one's own bed and chair, and chafing-dish in winter; and one's own table with the book and skull and crucifix that nobody touches, and the certainty that nobody will come to interrupt one's reading or thinking."

“Abundance of selfishness to begin with,” said Mr. Fletcher, laughing.

“And then to feel such satisfaction with one’s own lot,” continued Rose, “to look down from such pure solitude upon the world, and pity those who are struggling and toiling there; and to remember that one’s safety is owing to one’s virtuous resolution.”

“Selfishness again, and more pride,” interrupted her father. “But, Selina, which is the greatest charm in your eyes? for you look as if the very thought of it inspired you.”

“I was thinking of the grandest day of a whole life—the day of taking the veil. What a tide of feelings must rush in upon the young creature’s mind when she sees her family for the last time, they grieving to part with her, but admiring her for her piety! And then the glow of resolution, the noble contempt of the world, and the delight of setting such an example, at such an age! The old priests admiring and blessing her, the music, sometimes wailing and sometimes triumphant, as if it would celebrate her funeral and her marriage at the same

time; and the crowd pressing to catch a glimpse of such a holy heroine——”

Selina stopped short, struck with the expression of disgust in Mary's countenance.

“ Mary sees what you are blind to,” said Mr. Fletcher: “ she sees that half of this is enthusiasm, and the other half vanity. Mary, I had rather hear what would be most tempting to you.”

“ No part would be tempting,” said Mary, “ unless I could have one dear friend with me; but if there was one to whom I might speak and listen about those human sympathies which feed the life of our minds, I could be happy, I think, in praying and meditating, and doing all the good my heart and hands could effect. But I must also be free from all spiritual domination: I would never give up my soul in slavery to abbess or confessor. Unless I might worship as my spirit prompted, unless I might do good as the gospel enjoins, and love as human hearts are made to love, my devotion would be worthless, and I should be fit neither for heaven nor earth.”

“You will make a poor devotee,” observed Mr. Fletcher, smiling.

“There is no convent on earth that would admit you,” said her father: “you would not be pure enough; you do not go far enough beyond the gospel: you must be content with trying to be above the world while you are in the world.”

The happy father silently observed how his last words called up, as such thoughts never failed to do, the flush of strong emotion into his daughter’s cheek. Mary was not unfrequently inspired with a resolution quite as holy, and much more rational and modest, than animates a devotee in taking the veil.

When they were going out, Mr. Fletcher desired Anna, in case of strong temptation from what she should see to become a nun, to remember, that in the new jails in England every inmate has a cell, a bed, and a high window, all to himself; and that he is quite sure of his reveries being uninterrupted. There was no use in Anna’s looking indignant, the laugh was against her.

At the convent gate, the gentlemen left their

party, and proceeded to make some visits. Mr. Fletcher wished to introduce his friend to such of the inhabitants of Tours as he was acquainted with, and among others, to a gentleman who held a high office among the magistracy of the city.

Mary and Anna could scarcely believe, when the portress opened the gate, that they were actually entering a convent. A feeling of awe crept over them, as if they had set foot in some sacred enclosure; and this feeling was not lessened by the first view of the flitting figures which disappeared before them wherever they went—figures clothed in a dark and most unbecoming costume, which did not appear so remarkably convenient as to make up for its want of beauty. When the abbess joined them in her parlour, however, there was nothing particularly venerable in her appearance: she seemed very glad to see Mrs. Fletcher, (who was provided with a plea of business,) and inclined her head politely when introduced to the strangers. She asked some questions about their voyage, and their opinion of France in general, and

Tours in particular, and astonished them by laughing very loud and heartily when there was any opportunity for laughing at all.

“While you are busy with mamma, ma mère, we will seek Sister Célestine,” said Rose: “come, Mary, we will leave our two mothers together.”

“Oh! she is a little heretic!” exclaimed the abbess, laughing, as the girls left the room.

They first entered the refectory, where the nuns were talking in groups, having just finished their dinner. One and another ran to meet their heretical acquaintance, while others stood at a distance, and stared in a manner which rather abashed the strangers. Some withdrew, with an appearance of propriety, and two or three stood reading at the windows, which looked into the convent-garden; but the greater number were evidently remarking on the dress and countenances of the English girls. Sister Célestine and Sister Priscille after a while led the way up stairs to their cells. The first cell looked just like what Anna expected, except that there was no skull on the table. The book was turned down open: it was a book of devotion, and in

Latin, and the page at which Mary looked contained a marvellous account of the miraculous deeds of a female saint. Mary, with some hesitation, enquired of Sister Célestine if she believed every part of it. She looked rather shocked at the question, as she replied that, of course, she believed the whole of it.

“Had she known the book when she was young?” Anna enquired, thinking that this might account for her credulity.

“No; it was given to her when she entered the convent.”

She had previously learned to read Latin, they supposed.

“Oh dear no! they none of them thought that necessary. The priest read it over to them first, so that they knew what it was about, and nothing more was required than that they should read it over very frequently, so as not to forget it.” This cell had now lost its charm for Anna.

In the next, they found some disorder: cuttings and snippings of gay silk were lying beside the crucifix on the table. Sister Priscille, laughing and blushing, swept them away, owning that

she had, contrary to the rules, carried work into her cell.

“The truth is,” said she, “that poor little Caliste, whom I was teaching to dress a doll in the school-room this morning, was obliged to go before we had finished the cloak, and I brought it here, that she might not be disappointed. But, sisters, I trust to you not to complain of me to *la mère*.”

Célestine looked grave, but promised to let her off this time. Anna could not join Selina’s laugh.

One lively little nun, Sœur Agathe, was very impatient for the strangers to be conducted to some place at the top of the building, which she seemed to think better worth seeing than any thing else. “Presently,” said Célestine, repeatedly; but she would not let them alone for five minutes together. They looked into several cells as they passed, in some of which the nuns were reading intently. Mary would rather have staid behind in one of these than have proceeded, if she could have done so without disturbing their inmates; but when, at last, they

burst in upon one who was on her knees at prayers, she recoiled in great distress, and begged that no more disturbance might be caused on their account.

“Oh! it does not signify,” said Agathe: “she will know where to follow us when she has done.”

Mary resolved to say nothing more till she should meet with one whose countenance and manner should promise better things. At length they reached the last staircase which Agathe was so anxious for them to climb: it was steep, and opened out upon some leads on the roof of the building. Agathe skipped up before them, and handed out first one and then another, and then looked eagerly for their admiration.

“What a fine view!” exclaimed Mary, as her eye wandered over the rich fields and woods, and the verdant hills of Touraine, which were spread out before her.

“How you must long——” said Anna—but she checked herself, as she was going to remind the recluses what pleasures they lost by beholding this fair scene only from a distance.



“Oh no! we long for nothing,” said Agathe, lightly: “a holy life, you know, and certainty of heaven, are far better than the sin and misery of the world. But look on this side: you have not seen what I brought you to see yet.”

They looked, and saw a multitude of the chimneys of Tours, but little besides. Perceiving them at a loss, Agathe pointed between two piles of building, crying, “*Mais voyez donc!* you do not look. There is the great road from the north; and there is not a carriage which comes from Paris that we may not see from this place as the road winds.”

“This exceeds every thing,” thought Mary: “to talk one moment of a holy life, and the next to be proud and pleased to see the carriages come from Paris! I wish we could get away.”

Her composure was somewhat restored, however, by a conversation which she contrived to obtain with one of the more serious nuns whom she met in her way down. In her she found neither enthusiasm nor levity: she did not pretend to despise or to fear the world, or believe

that she must be perfectly holy and safe, because she had left it. She was thankful, she said, for peace and freedom from care; she had no family ties to bind her to society, and had felt so forlorn in her youth, from being an orphan, that she had longed for an asylum above every thing; she had obtained her desire, and was satisfied. Mary wished to know how far the improvement of the intellect was checked, and how soon the natural feelings were deadened or perverted by the discipline and influences of this strange community; but this was tender ground. She could scarcely make herself understood without wounding the feelings of the persons she compassionated. She enquired, however, whether there was not a great difference of rank and education among the young persons admitted. Not so much, she was told, as appeared to be generally thought.

“Since you took the vows, have the candidates been, for the most part, companions to you?”

“Yes. We have two or three who are sadly vulgar; but the rest have been educated in a

convent like myself, except poor Sister Thérèse and Sister Magdalen, whom you might see going to her cell as you came in."

"Why *poor* Thérèse? what became of her?"

"She died, poor thing, four years after she came in. I was really relieved when she was gone, for I am sure she was very wretched. Some of the sisters said she must have been in love when she took the vows; but I believe she was not."

"What made her wretched then?"

"La mère said that it was the pride and wantonness of her own heart, that made her hanker after the world, and would not let her be satisfied with being the spouse of Christ. I dare say it might be so; but it always seemed to me that she made a mistake in coming here at all. She expected that she should find companions who would feel holy raptures like her own; and that was too much to expect. She was never happy but when she was alone, and of course the sisters did not like her the better for that. She kept her place in the chapel till she could stand no

longer; and yet Father Ambrose was not pleased with her: he said she was high-minded."

"That was indeed the truth," murmured Mary, who thought of a different kind of high-mindedness than Father Ambrose had any idea of.

"Perhaps it was; yet she was lowly in her prayers: I know this, because I nursed her when she could not leave her cell; prayer was like meat and drink to her. 'I have no stay but Thee,' was on her lips perpetually in the long nights when her sickness wasted her."

"What was her disease?"

"We never could find out. Father Ambrose told the sisters that it came from the Evil One, to show that, though a nun, she was not safe. I hope he did not really think this; but it *was* very strange, as he said, that it always loosened its hold upon her when the holy bell rang. At the first sound of the matin bell, she would look so peaceful; and often fell asleep presently, though she had been tossing through the whole night."

"And how long did this last?"

“ Oh! many months: it was four years after she came in, as I told you, when she died. But,” after a pause, “ let me request you to tell no one here that I have said so much about poor Thérèse; for la mère thinks so ill of her, that she does not like we should mention her name.”

The request was needless: Mary would almost as soon have thought of taking the vows, after what she had heard, as of speaking to any one of the sisterhood about poor Thérèse.

“ And did Sister Magdalen, whom you mentioned, know Thérèse?” she enquired.

“ No; and I have sometimes wondered whether it would have been a good thing for them if Sister Magdalen had entered a year sooner. I think she might have saved Thérèse, or perhaps she might have gone the same way herself. They were a good deal alike in some things; but, happily, Magdalen is not so high-minded; she knows better how to submit.”

“ Then she has submitted?”

“ Yes: when she first took the vows, she used to write a great deal in her cell; and la mère found that it was sometimes poetry. Then she

used to sing, sometimes in the night, and very often indeed in the day; but they were not always hymns that she sang. Now, *la mère* said this would never do, and that nobody must bring the vanities of the world within these walls; so she took away the ink and paper she had, and put the oldest of the sisters into the next cell, to inform her if she heard her sing any thing but what we all sing.”

“And how did she bear this?” cried Mary, indignantly.

“She took it very quietly, which was the best thing she could do; for there was no help for it, you know. At first, she was rather unsociable, though never so much so as poor *Thérèse*; but she came round by degrees, and now, though the sisters still joke her about her gravity, she is very like the rest, and can be as droll as the merriest of them: there is no occasion to pity Sister Magdalen now.” And the nun looked amazed at Mary’s expression of grief.

“You do not mean,” she continued, “that you pity Magdalen as you pity *Thérèse*?”

“More, a thousand times more!”

“ Mais cela est inconcevable ! when I tell you that Sister Magdalen is so happy ! c’est inconcevable ! ”

And inconceivable it remained to her, while she followed Mary’s hasty steps down to the abbess’s parlour, where her party were waiting for her. Lively tongues were busy on all sides, exchanging adieus, and uttering last jokes. La mère herself rallied Mary on her gravity, observing that she was almost solemn enough to be a nun. Mary escaped as soon as she could. While within the gates, a sense of oppression weighed upon her, as if she were in a prison : when she trod the grass on which shadows from the trees were dancing, and felt the breeze blow in her face, tears sprang forth, and she thought with a less tumultuous grief of the fate of poor Thérèse, and even of Sister Magdalen.

CHAPTER X.

Sensibility without Sense.

It was evident to all observers, from the day that Anna and Selina met, that they were not the friends they had been and had intended again to be. No complaint was made by either, and their manner of speaking of and conducting themselves towards each other was affectionate, though somewhat melancholy. In their souls, however, they mourned over the change in each other: Anna thought Selina grown cold and worldly; Selina thought Anna mysterious and very selfish. The fact was, as Mr. Fletcher declared to his wife, and as she could not deny, that Anna was too much engrossed with her own thoughts, and too dead to realities, to perceive

the improvement which change of circumstances had really wrought in her friend.

It was not long before Anna experienced the usual painful consequences of her strange habits; and the fact that such consequences overtook her wherever she went, might have convinced her how preposterous was her prevailing idea that all the world was in league against her, because her character was not understood. At first, the young people paired off as formerly, Rose and Mary, Selina and Anna; but this arrangement was soon found undesirable on many accounts. Though Rose was a very good, and, in some respects, a very superior girl, she was not such a one as Mary could like to be with all day long while Mrs. Fletcher was within reach, and while there were points of sympathy between Selina and herself which seemed to strengthen daily. Neither could Mary see the use or pleasure of splitting so small a family party into coteries; she therefore diffused the blessing of her society (and a great blessing it was) among all, and was duly prized by all but her own unaccountable sister. Anna, on the

contrary, had no idea of enjoyment in any but a tête-à-tête conversation; and her mode of conducting a tête-à-tête had become so strange, that it was no wonder her companion preferred drawing in her chair among the cheerful circle who were talking or reading with lightness of heart and forgetfulness of themselves. Add to this, that Anna's habits were now such as to disqualify her for feeling on an equality in well-bred society—that she was too late for breakfast, too late for dinner, too late for tea, never ready to walk when others were waiting, and unable to attend when others were reading or speaking to her—and it cannot be surprising that, though treated with great kindness, she was left alone in this little world, where she had expected to find so much happiness. Mr. Fletcher was the only person who lost patience with her. Her father saved her from disgrace as often as he could; and Mary was devoted to her, though she received no thanks. She spent more time in dressing Anna, in working for Anna, in helping Anna, in one way or another, than on her own affairs. It was well they had brought Susan;

for there was full employment for her also in taking care of her helpless young lady. As for Mrs. Fletcher, she watched tenderly over her health, which was becoming very infirm; but of what use were all endeavours to cheer her spirits and revive her health, when she had no mercy on her own nerves? It frequently happened, that she came out of a reverie flushed and feverish, or that her hands were damp and cold, and her voice broken and almost lost. “What could she be thinking of?” was a frequent subject of speculation with her friends; but they could never discover which of the thousand agitating scenes of human suffering and delight were oftenest presented in vivid apparition to the poor girl’s diseased imagination. She started in such a terrified way if spoken to, that Mary had insensibly adopted the practice of *breaking* every thing to her, even if the plan were only for an evening engagement. This was a pity, for the precaution was useless, as she was startled with less and less things perpetually.

“Anna,” said her sister one day, when she found her leaning over her drawing-board, doing

nothing, "I have something to propose to you—a little plan which I hope you will not object to."

Anna looked troubled and bewildered.

"I do not know what you will think of beginning to travel again already."

"To travel!" repeated Anna: "to Italy?"

"Oh no!" replied Mary, "not nearly so far; only to Paris. Papa has just told me that he must go to Paris for a week or so, on business. Now, I think he is not very well, and we know he dislikes being alone among strangers, and I think we ought to go with him. I have not said so to him yet; I thought I would ask you first."

"What can he be going to Paris for? What can be the reason? Oh, Mary!"

"Never mind the reason now," said Mary, observing how her sister's hand trembled; "I dare say he will tell us the next time he comes in; but he was going out and in a hurry when he told me his plan. You will like to go, will not you?"

"Oh yes! I am ready to go any where, to do

any thing," said Anna, looking as intrepid as if she were trying to be like Jephtha's daughter.

"I do not know what the Fletchers will think of our seeing Paris before they do, after all; but I am sure they will wish us to go and take care of papa; and there can be no doubt that he will like to have us."

Here however Mary was, for once, mistaken: Mr. Byerley would not hear of any one accompanying him; and, moreover, communicated not a syllable respecting the business which called him away. When Mary was packing his portmanteau, he came himself to see that his precious packet of letters was put in safe. Mary observed, laughing, that she hoped he would bring her some new music, for the letters took up so much room, that it would require a large parcel to fill up their place when they were left behind. Her father observed that these letters would afford him abundance of engagements, and that Mary must not be uneasy if he did not return at the end of one week, or even two.

"If it should be three," said Mary, "I think we must follow, and find you."

“ Do not think of such a thing, I charge you,” replied her father, seriously.

“ O no ! papa. I did not seriously think of going to Paris by ourselves ; much less of watching any of your proceedings.”

Mr. Byerley’s first letter came as soon as expected, and told of a pleasant journey : but it contained nothing besides, except the address to the hotel where he resided. The second letter was longer in coming, and it seemed to his anxious children as if the third would never arrive.

But for this anxiety, the time of his absence would have passed quickly and cheerfully. The tyranny of custom, by which French young ladies are made mere cyphers in company, was somewhat relaxed in the case of the English girls. They attended several evening parties, where they were not condemned, as they probably might have been in Paris, to sit beside Mrs. Fletcher or one another, for a whole evening, without being spoken to. The Protestant clergyman, whose church they attended, had been in England ; and his knowledge of our cus-

toms, as well as his kindness of heart, prompted him to converse with the young strangers as if they were rational beings, and to endeavour to draw out their talents.

At first, Mary could scarcely reconcile what she saw of this gentleman in company with her judgment of his pulpit services. She had been almost disgusted, the first Sunday, with his sermon, and with the manner in which it was delivered. She was not sufficiently aware how the varieties of national taste extend to the modes of conducting public worship ; and the delivery, which to the usual attendants of M. Mesnil appeared grave and emphatic, was to her almost theatrical. Out of the pulpit, nothing of this was discernible. He was ready, on every fair occasion, to advert to the subjects most closely connected with his profession, and which were evidently nearest his heart ; and the growing intimacy between his family and that of Mr. Fletcher was founded and cherished by their sympathy in their religious principles and sentiments.

M. Mesnil had married a very young and

lively lady of Paris, whose friends were surprised that one so gay and accomplished should have lost her heart to a grave clergyman, and been ready to make up her mind to live in the provinces for the rest of her days. She proved, however, to all who cared to know, that though her choice was made under the influence of love, it was not made in folly. She proved an excellent wife, and was an exemplary pastor's lady. Fond as she was of her harp, she liked still better the music of grateful voices; and her smiles were as sweet, and her eyes sparkled as brilliantly in the cottages near Tours, as in the saloons of Paris. Her tastes were as refined as ever, while more simple; and their gratification was promoted by her husband more eagerly than they ever were by her admirers in the great city. Her flower-garden was the delight of them both, and was embellished by their own hands. They sang together; and each, for the sake of the other, embraced every opportunity of enjoying the pleasures of cultivated society, and the delights of natural beauty. Their children were young—a noble boy of five years old, and two little girls

of three and two. They were well-managed, healthy, happy children—the best of amusements to the English girls, who were never weary of the oddity of hearing a foreign language lisped by infants, and of observing wherein children are alike all over the world, and wherein natural differences introduce a variety, even from birth.

The two families were more together than ever after the arrival of the Byerleys. M. Mesnil undertook to convince his foreign friends that they were prejudiced against the pulpit oratory of France, and that it was not enough to venerate Fénélon, whom no one could help venerating. He made them familiar with the most eminent French divines, and brought them to acknowledge that there was more common ground between pious and enlightened Protestants and Catholics, than they had previously believed. They walked together very frequently, the children accompanying them. Little Charles rode a stately goat, as is not uncommon with children abroad; and this picturesque steed was harnessed with an elegance answerable to the appearance of his young rider. Charles's mamma, however

grave she might look while teaching him to read, looked much more like his eldest sister than his mother when they played in the fields, or sat down to rest in the woods.

It seemed strange that Anna should be struck by one so gay, so totally the opposite of herself, as Madame Mesnil ; but it was evident, from their first meeting, that she was more awake to what was said, more attentive to what was done by this lady, than by any body else ; and this circumstance gave Mary a gleam of hope of her sister's restoration to mental health. On her part, Madame Mesnil, though she admired and approved Mary to a high degree, attached herself more to Anna ; whether through compassion, or genuine sympathy, or by dint of imagining qualities which did not exist, Mary sought not to know, so delighted was she with the fact. She contrived, as often as possible, to send Anna alone to M. Mesnil's ; encouraged her to accept invitations to dine tête-à-tête with Madame, when her husband was out ; and, in short, to throw them together as much as possible. The self-complacency caused in Anna's mind by these cir-

cumstances, proved an impulse for a time. It was but a short-lived impulse ; but it inspired her sister with hope, and herself with a pleasure long lost.

“ Where is Anna ? ” was the enquiry one day, when it was time she should be urged to dress for her visit to Madame Mesnil.

“ She is gone,” said Mrs. Fletcher : “ dressed and gone half an hour ago ; and the volume of Boileau with her that I see you are looking for. She has finished it.”

“ And look at her drawing,” said Selina : “ it promises well ; does it not ? ”

“ Beautiful ! ” exclaimed Mary. “ O, I wonder when papa will come back ! ”

“ Make no observations to him, Mary : let him discover it for himself.”

“ Certainly,” replied Mary ; “ I will anticipate nothing. But I long to see the hope breaking in upon him.”

There was no need to explain what the “ it ” and the “ hope ” meant. There was a perfect understanding in the family, and the great anxiety of one was the great anxiety of all.

Mary flew to meet her sister when she came home, for once, not afraid of startling her by sudden intelligence. Before she could speak, however, Anna cried out, “A letter from papa? O, say yes!”

“Yes,” said Mary, joyfully, drawing her sister’s arm within her own. “He will be home to-morrow; so you must tell us to-night every thing about your visit.”

It was delightful to hear her once again speak gaily, and without reserve. It was evident that she had played with the children, and remarked what passed around her. “

No one enquired into the particulars of her conversation with Madame Mesnil. It had evidently done her good, and that was enough.

CHAPTER XI.

A new Abode.

MR. BYERLEY returned somewhat fatigued with his journey, but in high spirits. He said but little respecting his doings and the persons he had seen in Paris, but was very communicative about all that happened on the road. He had been much entertained by one man in particular, who had sat beside him all the way from Paris, and been very anxious to make acquaintance with the Englishman. He appeared to have very strange, erroneous notions of England, its government, and political parties.

“ I hope he did not lead you to talk too freely,” interrupted Mr. Fletcher.

“ O, no !” replied Mr. Byerley ; “ and if I had talked treason it would hardly have signi-

fied. You have no idea of the man's simplicity."

"Not so good a one as he has of yours, perhaps. But what are this simple man's politics?"

"Just what one might expect from such a person. He is not very well contented with the state of things in this country, but does not see how it is to be improved. He seems one of the grumblers, who set other people to work, but do nothing themselves."

"What sort of looking man is he?"

"A very common looking person, with a black coat and ugly brown wig."

"Well, Byerley, simple as he may be, you are quite as much so, depend upon it, to talk politics in a diligence."

"Oh! it all depends upon who listens. This was a good-natured creature as could be. He was very civil about my accommodation, and enquired what luggage I had, that he might have an eye to its being stowed away in the right place."

"Is your portmanteau safe?" enquired Mr.

Fletcher. Mr. Byerley only answered by pointing to it as it lay in the hall.

“Your civil friend examined it, I dare say.”

“Yes, such people are always curious. I saw him spelling out my name and feeling the weight of the trunk; and he remarked the roll of paper (music for Mary) peeping out of my coat-pocket. He began fishing to discover what it was.”

“And did you show it him?”

“No: I thought it was time to check his curiosity, so I put it out of sight.”

“Well, you had better have had your girls with you. I will answer for it they would know better how to conduct themselves in a diligence than their father. But come, I have made an appointment for you at Béranger’s. He is to show us the plan of the new Institute; and it is time we were gone.”

When the gentlemen returned from the house of M. Béranger, (the magistrate to whom Mr. Byerley had before been introduced,) Mr. Fletcher looked very grave, while his friend was laughing.

“Whom do you think we met, just now?” said he.

“The man in the brown wig?”

“Yes; a perilous looking personage, is he not, Fletcher?”

“How oddly Béranger behaved to you!” was Mr. Fletcher’s only reply.

“Yes, he was as stiff and formal as an Englishman; but I suppose that is his magisterial air.”

“M. Béranger stiff and formal!” exclaimed Mrs. Fletcher: “I never saw him so.”

“Nor I till to-day,” replied her husband. “Did you see where your brown-wigged friend came from, Byerley?”

“I saw him come out of a house, but I did not observe the house particularly.”

“He came out of Béranger’s office-door.”

“Indeed!” exclaimed Mr. Byerley, starting: “and yet he told me that he knew no one in this place, and should proceed on his journey south in a few hours.”

While this conversation passed, the girls were dressing to go out. Mr. and Mrs. Fletcher were

glad of this, as they did not wish to communicate to Mary and Anna the vague uneasiness they began to feel respecting the consequences of this journey.

Mrs. Fletcher walked out with the young people. They were tempted to prolong their ramble till past the hour of dinner ; yet when they came in, the cloth was not laid, no servant was visible, and no one answered the bell. Mrs. Fletcher caught a glimpse of her husband in the garden behind the house. He was pacing backwards and forwards with hurried steps. She went to him, trying in vain to prevent Mary from following her. The truth was soon out. Mr. Byerley had been arrested during their absence, and conveyed first to a magistrate and then to prison, without being able to learn the nature of the accusation against him.

Mary strengthened herself for a few moments with the belief that this proceeding originated in a mistake, which would be presently rectified ; but when Mr. Fletcher made no reply to her expression of hope, she remembered the packet of letters, the mystery of the journey to Paris, the

strange behaviour of the fellow-traveller, and his egress from the magistrate's office, and, finally, the deportment of M. Béranger himself; and no doubt remained that some political offence was imputed to her father.

Her first desire was to go to him; and she ran into the house that she might communicate to Anna what had happened, and lose no time in proceeding to the prison with her sister, who, she could not doubt, would be eager to accompany her. Anna was, however, in no condition for such an exertion. Though Rose had communicated the fact as gently as possible, the feeble-minded girl was frightfully agitated. She had sunk shivering on the ground, and clung so convulsively to the sofa, that it was impossible to raise her.

“Anna,” said her sister calmly, “have you not always said that on great occasions you could command yourself? This is a great occasion.”

“O, my father! my father!” cried the trembling girl; and the voice of her wailing thrilled every nerve in Mary's frame.

“Listen, Anna! My father is, no doubt,

looking for us, expecting us every moment. Will you not go to him?"

"Go to him!" cried Anna, springing up. "Let us go instantly, and never leave him. Yet—Oh! to see him in a dungeon, among the wretches there, shut up, perhaps, for life—I cannot, no, I cannot——" and she sank down on the sofa, utterly exhausted.

Mary looked at her sister, and then at the door: her feelings were harrowed by what she saw and heard. She longed to restore her sister, and yet was impatient to be gone.

"Leave your sister to us," said Mrs. Fletcher: "you see she cannot go."

"But what shall I say to my father, Anna?" said her sister in a broken voice, as she bent over her. "Look up, and speak to me, or how shall I comfort my father?" But still Anna did not uncloze her eyes.

"She will soon be better," said Mrs. Fletcher, trying to smile: "leave her to me, and go where your heart bids you."

Mr. Fletcher drew Mary's arm within his, and hastened with her to the prison, preparing her

by the way for the probable disappointment she would meet with in being refused admittance. Mary declared that she *would* get in, by some means or other ; and in answer to the objection that it might be impossible, she declared that, in such cases, women had been known to conquer what are often called impossibilities.

As Mr. Fletcher expected, the jailer had received strict orders to admit no person whatever to Mr. Byerley's presence. There was no use in entreaty, or in any mode of representing the case. He must obey orders. He did not refuse, however, to answer questions. The gentleman seemed in good spirits, he said, except that he was vexed at not having an apartment to himself.

"Not an apartment to himself! Where was he then?"

"In the same room with some debtors."

"Any body else?"

"Yes; two or three felons, for whom there was not room elsewhere."

Mary's heart sickened as she turned away.

"I will go to M. Béranger's," said she: "he will not, he *shall* not deny me."

“This is the way,” said Mr. Fletcher; “you are turning homewards.”

“Perhaps Anna is able to go now,” replied Mary. “She shall have her choice, at least; and she will help me to plead with M. Béranger.”

Anna was better. She lay quietly weeping on the sofa, and scarcely looked up as her sister entered.

“I have not seen him: they will not let us in, without leave, Anna. Will you go with me to obtain leave from M. Béranger? It will do you good, if you can exert yourself so far.”

Anna looked bewildered. Mrs. Fletcher, unwisely, as Mary thought, objected that she was unequal to the exertion. This observation, however, had the effect of rousing Anna.

“Why should not I as well as Mary?” demanded she, starting up. “He is my father as well as Mary’s. Who shall prevent my discharging a daughter’s duty to him? It is very unjust: it is very unkind——.” While thus exclaiming, Mary tied her bonnet for her: her own hands trembled too much.

Mr. Fletcher’s stronger voice now prevailed.

He declared decidedly that Anna's appearance would, without doubt, injure her father's interests. To a cool and wary magistrate, who did not understand the vehemence of her feelings, her agitated appearance would give the idea that there was reason for apprehension that the result of an examination was dreaded. "We believe your father to be innocent," said he; "and the calmness of our manner ought to testify the confidence of our belief. Look at your sister, Mary, and say if any stranger would believe that she had any present confidence whatever to repose upon."

Anna's face, flushed with anger and convulsed with fear, was indeed ill-fitted to enforce any plea founded on a consciousness of innocence. She was left behind, exclaiming against the injustice, but, in reality, relieved at being spared the necessity of exertion.

M. Béranger, guessing the nature of Mary's errand, declined seeing her, on the plea of business; but Mary, who felt that the part she now had to take was that of decision, or what would be called obstinacy by the persons she had to

deal with, replied that she would wait till M. Béranger was at liberty. She took her seat in the office, and remained two long hours; at the end of which time, the magistrate, having no hope of getting quit of her, admitted her and Mr. Fletcher to his presence. Again and again he answered, that his directions were positive, to allow no access to persons imprisoned for political offences. Mary reasoned on the impossibility of her affording any advantage to her father's cause by being with him, or of her opposing any hindrance to the course of justice: she only wanted to be let in alone; she would submit to be searched; she would carry in nothing but linen; she would not ask to come out again till her father should be also released. The magistrate gently represented, that she seemed to consider the last circumstance as far more probable than the facts warranted, and that she did not know what she was engaging for, in offering to stay in prison as long as her father. Mary smiled as she observed, that where there was in reality no offence, there could be no doubt of the issue, if justice were done, of which she en-

tertained no fear; but that, if she knew her father's imprisonment to be for life, she should be no less earnest than now to be with him on the terms she proposed. When she pleaded her father's delicate health, and the ease and careful attendance to which he was accustomed, the magistrate was evidently touched and disturbed; and as she went on, (the more urgently as she began to see hope of success,) he stopped her with a promise to consider what could be done, and to send to her in the morning. No, she replied; she could not wait; she wished to join her father this night. M. Béranger's next resource was to pace the apartment; and a glance from Mr. Fletcher, (who wisely forbore to interfere,) told Mary that her cause was prospering.

It was late, and quite dusk, before the anxious family learned what had detained the absent members so long. Anna had consented to go to bed, and it was hoped she was asleep, that she might be spared the struggle of parting with her sister, who only returned for the necessaries she was to convey to her father. Mrs. Fletcher made her sit down and eat, while Rose and the

maid Susan went to put up her parcel for her. It was necessary that they should enter Anna's room with a candle: she started up, and poured out questions so fast, that Rose was obliged to tell her the state of the case, and to promise that her sister should come up to bid her farewell.

“Just one kiss and then leave her,” said Mrs. Fletcher, as Mary took the candle to go to Anna: “do not let her agitate you or herself.”

This, however, it was in the power of no one to prevent. It will scarcely be believed—Anna herself could scarcely credit it afterwards—that her last words to her own sister on such an occasion as this, were words of jealous reproach.

“Do not dwell on any thing unpleasant, my love,” said Mrs. Fletcher, as she saw, by Mary's quivering lips, that something had been said to wound her: “your sister is not herself to-day; she will soon be better.”

“How shall I know that she is?”

“M. Béranger will convey a message to you, I am sure. I will call and ask him; or perhaps he will allow Anna to come and tell you herself that she is better.”

“Madame Mesnil,” said Mary——.

“She shall see Anna to-morrow, my love; and never fear but that, among us, we shall be able to comfort her.” And after a mournful farewell, Mary again set forth, with Mr. Fletcher and Susan.

M. Béranger’s order procured them immediate admission to the jailer’s apartment, where Mary’s bundle having been tossed over by the jailer’s wife, and found to contain nothing suspicious, she took leave of her friend and of the weeping Susan, and followed her conductor to the apartment which contained her father. Hers was not the soul to recoil at the sights and sounds which met her every where in this dismal abode. The passages were empty and cold, and echoed back their footsteps. They met one or two turnkeys, who stared at the unusual sight of a lady, out of visiting hours, and looked back to see which of the cells she was about to visit. At length they stopped, and the jailer gave her the light to hold while he unbarred and unlocked the door. He observed that her hand was steady.

“One would think that Mam’selle had been

used to the inside of a prison," he observed.

Mary replied, that she had never before entered one.

"Nor Monsieur?"

"Yes; my father has been accustomed to visit the prisoner."

"Ha! what a strange amusement! We do not allow of such curiosity here."

Mary was sorry to hear this: she thought it promised ill for the comfort of the prisoners; and it was evident that the man had no idea that any one would voluntarily enter a prison from any motive but curiosity.

He opened the door cautiously, and made her enter first. The room, which was very large, was so dark that she could not see either end of it; she discerned many moving figures, but not distinctly enough to recognize her father.

"Mais où est il?" said the jailer, holding the dim light above his head: "call him yourself, Mam'selle; I know not these English names."

Mary pronounced the name, but the low sound was not heard. There was no need, for her fa-

ther, mistrusting his own eyes, came forward to see whether or not it were indeed his daughter.

Mary seized his arm, and was, for the present, happy. The jailer favoured them with the use of the light for a short time, saying that he would return for it himself.

Before she would indulge in any conversation, she examined into the nature of the accommodations which had been provided for her father. They were wretched enough. A screen was placed across one corner of the dreary apartment, and behind it was placed the mattress on which he was to sleep. A bench was the only piece of furniture allowed him besides. The other corners were partitioned off in a similar manner for other unhappy inmates of this place; and during the day, her father told her, many more were admitted, so that there was no hope of peace and quiet. Some effort must be made to obtain a separate apartment; if this could not be done, Mary must make up her mind to leave him the next day. Mary smiled, in a firm resolution to do no such thing: she had, however, a

strong hope that a separate cell might be obtained.

She observed that her father's supper stood untasted: she urged him to eat while she arranged his bed comfortably; observing that she had supped before she came. She judged rightly, that example would be better than entreaty: her father ate because she had eaten.

By the time she had laid on the sheets she had brought, and made herself somewhat at home in what she called their own apartment, the jailer came for the light; and in return for a handsome fee, promised Mary the comfort of an occasional retreat to his wife's apartment, if her father should be obliged to remain where he was. He further favoured them by drawing up a huge table outside the screen, by which fortification they felt themselves secure from interruption; but no intreaties could prevail on him to leave the light.

Mr. Byerley refused to sleep while Mary watched beside him, but consented at last to lie down, though declaring that he was not so weary as she said he appeared. She sat down beside

him, and they talked long in whispers, interrupted only by the slight noises which told them that there were sleepers within hearing. At length, Mr. Byerley, overcome by the fatigues of his journey, and of all that he had since gone through, fell asleep with his daughter's hand clasped within his own. During the succeeding hours, a world of ideas passed through Mary's wakeful mind. Seated as she was, in solitary watchfulness beside her suffering parent, amidst strangers, in the very room with criminals, with whom she was shut up for she knew not how long, she was easy and happy in comparison with her sister, who, in her comfortable apartment, carefully tended by servant and friends, was restlessly miserable, not only on her father's account, but through jealousy of her sister, and the reproaches of her own conscience.

In a few hours Mr. Byerley awoke; and his daughter, perceiving that he was really refreshed, and that he would not sleep again, consented to repose in her turn. She felt safe in the guardianship of her parent, and slept till it was broad daylight.

This day was spent by the friends of the prisoner in active exertion to learn the nature of the accusation against him, and the probable issue of the affair, and to secure for him such temporary comfort as might by any means be obtained. Mr. Byerley employed Mary in drawing up memorials to be presented in every quarter where there was any hope of their being of use. This exertion, and the hope which it excited, were cheering to them both. At one sentence, which strongly expressed the prisoner's consciousness of innocence, Mary staid her pen, and looked up in her father's face.

"Speak, my dear," said he; "tell me what you are thinking of: if you have any doubt of my innocence, say so."

"I do not, of course, suspect you of any moral guilt—of any act which you would not pronounce to be virtuous; but, excuse me, because I know nothing of the purpose of your going to Paris;—has nothing been done which the laws or the government of this country would declare to be wrong?"

"Nothing, my love, which the laws do not

sanction; something, perhaps, which the government may not like, and for which it may choose to punish me; but nothing for which it can bring me to trial, or which any lawyer in the kingdom can declare to be unconstitutional."

The full explanation into which Mr. Byerley now entered, satisfied Mary that she might with a safe conscience speak and write of her father's entire innocence, though it left considerable apprehensions of the consequences of these strange events. She was glad to divert her thoughts from the dark future, by busying herself as much as possible; but her attention was perpetually recalled to her present situation by the disagreeable sounds which reached her from the wretched inmates of their apartment. She was hidden from their observation by the screen; but their coarse jests, their oaths, and vehement complaints, offended her ears perpetually, though she gave no outward sign to her father of having heard them. It was not many hours before one change for the better took place in their situation. When the turnkey brought their dinner, he informed them of the magistrate having order-

ed that they should be allowed a separate apartment, which would be ready for them before night.

This cell was found to contain a smaller one within; and Mary had no doubt that the jailer had had her accommodation in view in conducting her father hither in preference to other cells. This symptom of humanity raised her spirits, and she spread her little mattress with almost as much satisfaction as if it had been in a better place. Here she and her father passed a week—a long week, unvaried by any circumstance but an occasional message, transmitted through M. Béranger and the jailer, that all their friends were well, and were employing their energies on Mr. Byerley's behalf. They could comfort themselves on Anna's account only by hoping that she was included among the friends who were well; for it was impossible to obtain a more particular report of her.

About noon, on the eighth day of their confinement, the door was unbarred and thrown open, and Mr. Fletcher and Anna entered. The surprise of this meeting was almost too much

for the prisoners. When they could enquire what turn their affairs had taken, they heard joyful news. The worst charges against Mr. Byerley, those of sedition and conspiracy against the government, were relinquished through inability to substantiate them; and it was now hoped, though with no degree of certainty, that the accusation would amount to nothing worse than carrying sealed letters, an act forbidden by the Post-office laws, and punishable by a short imprisonment only.

Mary's heart felt suddenly lightened of the weight of a calamity; but she could control herself in joy as well as in grief; and the calm of her manner and countenance showed whither she referred her feelings of gratitude and joy.

"Come, come," said Mr. Fletcher, when the first burst of intelligence had been received and discussed, "we must lose no time in making our arrangements, for our lawyer friend will be here presently, and I shall take my departure to-morrow."

"What arrangements?"

"Anna will remain with her father; and you,

Mary, must go with me. Make no objection, my dear: on all accounts it is desirable that the exchange should be made, and my wife and daughters are looking anxiously for you."

Mary was so far from making any objection, that she was rejoiced at the opportunity thus afforded to Anna of taking her share of the duty in which she felt so much pleasure. She withdrew with Anna into her own little cell, to prepare for her departure, and to introduce her sister to the scanty accommodations the place afforded. Anna shuddered as she looked round, and seemed more than half inclined to draw back; but of this her sister took no notice, though she inwardly compassionated her fears.

"Can you sleep here?" enquired Anna.

"O yes! very well. It is a very good mattress, and the room quite undisturbed by noise. There is no access to it, you see, but by my father's room. I never slept better, though I had not such an easy mind as we may all have now."

"You will come to-morrow, will not you?"

"Certainly, as soon as visitors are admitted. Our best way will be to take our place here by

turns, day and day about. This will amuse my father most, and be best for us."

Anna made no reply but by another timid look round.

Mary smiled as she continued: "You will find that my father has much to relate as well as you: I will leave it to him to tell you what we have been doing all this week. I shall think of you this evening talking so busily and comfortably together. It will do my father more good than any thing else could do, to hear all you have to tell him; for we know scarcely any thing yet of what our friends have been doing for us."

"Oh! what is that?" cried Anna, at the sound of the unbarring of the outer door.

"I suppose it is the lawyer who was to come. Yes, it is," continued Mary, after a peep into her father's room; "so we must be gone. Farewell, till to-morrow morning."

Anna's eyes were swimming in tears when her sister left her. If the smallest choice had been allowed her, she would have gone home with Mr. Fletcher. As it was, she said, in her per-

verse heart, that Mary was so wonderfully ready to depart, that it was clear she did not like the prison; so she made up her mind to dislike it too, and to think it hard that she, delicate as she was, should be left there.

As soon as the lawyer was gone, she joined her father. He did not wonder at the visible constraint of her manner; but the greater the cause for it, the deeper was his compassion for her. Never, perhaps, even to Mary, had his words and manner been so tender as now to his conscious and unhappy daughter. He succeeded, at length, in raising her spirits; and there was so much to relate on each side, and now so great cause for hope, that this evening proved nearly as cheerful as Mary hoped it might be.

To her, this day afforded much enjoyment. The air, sunshine, and verdure, were delicious after a week's seclusion within stone walls. She passed the afternoon in the garden with her friends, listening and relating by turns, and enjoying the delights of their affection, and of vivid hopes for her father; these delights being,

unconsciously to herself, enhanced by the satisfaction of her own reflections on past duties.

M. and Mde. Mesnil came to see and congratulate her, and to offer to go and visit her father. It was settled that the pastor should accompany her the next day. Madame Mesnil, whose influence had done more to tranquillize Anna than any which the Fletchers could exert, declared her intention of taking her young friend home to dinner with her to-morrow, that she might hear what sort of a heroine she had made in prison.

No one was ever, in truth, less like a heroine. Anna started at every sound, and appeared in perpetual terror, even while her hand was clasped in her father's. In vain he smiled, and assured her that no persons were ever more secure from interruption than they were till supper time; in vain he urged her then to eat, and conversed with the turnkey, to prove to her that the man was civil, and that there was nothing to fear. She was somewhat relieved when they were locked in for the night, but more nervous than ever when she found herself alone in her

dismal little cell. She crept shivering into bed, and cried almost the whole night. Of course she looked, in the morning, little fitted to cheer a prison; and breakfast passed almost in silence. As soon as it was removed, her father took her hand, saying:—

“ My child! you are very unhappy.”

At the first word, Anna laid down her head on his knee and wept bitterly. All attempts to soothe her being vain, her father continued:—

“ Surely all this grief is not for me; there is now no cause for it, for my safety is certain. You must have some secret trouble, which you conceal from me. Why will you not give me your confidence?”

“ You know—you know,” said she, in a broken voice, “ that I am miserable: you know why I am miserable.”

“ I see that you are unhappy; but, unless there be something that I am ignorant of, I see no reason why you should not be as happy as other people if you choose it.”

“ No, never; nobody loves me; people pity me, and look down upon me, and do what they

can to help me; but they do not love me, and I cannot live without being loved."

"Supposing all this to be true, which I think it is not, how happens it?"

"Ah! that is the misery of it. I know you think I deserve it; and I do in part; but indeed, indeed I am not understood."

"If so, I ask again, how happens it?"

Anna was silent.

"Think and speak honestly," continued her father, after a pause: "this is too serious a matter to be trifled with. If you are indeed misunderstood by all the world, where does the fault lie? is all the world to blame, or are you?"

"I am partly, I own; I have made some great mistakes about myself, which I can never repair, and——"

"Stop, my love; I never sanction the belief that any mistakes are quite beyond reparation. You have committed errors in your management of yourself; but, while you live, you have the power of retracing your steps. Go back to the point where your errors began, and then you can

proceed in the safe and right way in which it has ever been my wish to guide you."

"I cannot, I cannot," cried the unhappy girl: "I am altogether disappointed in myself; every thing has turned out differently from what I expected; I thought I should have been——" She could not command her voice.

"You thought you should have been something unlike—something far beyond what women generally are. I saw what your ambition was, and, as you well remember, warned you from the first that you mistook the way to gratify it. While you should have been exercising yourself in the virtues you wished to attain, you spent your energies in dreaming about them, and the consequence is——"

"Oh! do not reproach me with it; I know too well what it is. I am fit for nothing—equal to neither great occasions nor small. I am always in the way of other people when they do not want me; and when they do, I fail them utterly. Oh! do not reproach me with all this."

"Not for the world, my love! What heart could that father have who would reproach you

as you reproach yourself? I will allow some truth in what you have said; but I must add, that with so clear an apprehension of the evil as you have shown, and so noble a candour in acknowledging it, there is strong reason for hoping that you may get the better of your troubles entirely."

"No; I shall never have strength now; you do not know how often I have resolved and failed. I will make no more resolutions, and then I shall not incur the sin of breaking them."

"Anna, I am now convinced of what I have long feared. What you have just said is more painful to me than all that has passed: it proves to me that you depend on the strength of your unassisted will—that you have ceased to seek help where you know you may ever find it. I see, by your silent shame, that it is so. And have you really made no further use of your religion than to feast your imagination, while you were daily experiencing the weakness of your own will?"

Anna turned away in agony.

"Tell me, my child, if I do you injustice,

Give me but one sign that I too have misunderstood you. If you have indeed continued to study the Scriptures with intentness of heart, if you have, to this day, sought relief and strength in prayer, turn to me, and I will entreat your pardon for my harshness."

Anna turned not, and her emotion was fearful: her father's was scarcely less.

"It is not too late, be the case what it may: while the stray sheep lives, it may be brought back. But is it possible, that while we have read and prayed together, your heart was far from your lips? Was your fancy busy even then, with the applause of the world?"

"Yes; it is that which has ruined me," said Anna at length. "For years my chief motive has been praise, human praise; and now I cannot act against my inclinations from any other. And I have lost all power over my thoughts: they wander away at all times: the attempt to restrain them made me miserable; and now that I have given it up, I am more miserable still."

"No doubt, my child; and the only way to recover your peace is to resume your efforts—

not with a vague wish merely, or an unassisted resolution to govern yourself better. You must gather motives from a renewed study of your Bible; you must obtain strength from prayer; and you must also exercise yourself perpetually in action. Circumstances occur every hour which may afford you an opportunity of breaking in upon your reveries, and doing something which your inclination would prompt you to leave undone. There is more efficacy in attempts *to act*, in a case like yours, than you have any idea of."

Anna knew this, but doubted her own power. Her father suggested various helps to her own feeble resolution, of which she might make use; the chief of which was an increased confidence in her sister. From this, her father saw with anguish that she recoiled: there was no use in arguing against so unnatural a feeling; he could only pray that it might be changed into a more kindly and generous emotion, by the discipline to which he hoped his unhappy child would henceforth subject herself.

He perceived that, painful as this conversation

was, it had been a relief to Anna, who had not for many long months opened her griefs to any one. Her emotions had, however, so totally enfeebled her, that her father found it necessary to assist her to her room, where he laid her on her bed, and saw her fall asleep almost instantly, thus proving that the exhaustion of her body was greater than the disturbance of her mind.

When Mary and M. Mesnil entered the cell, they found Mr. Byerley leaning over the table, his face covered with his hands. They made no very close enquiries respecting the cause of his grief; but as, at the end of an hour, Anna was still asleep, Mary proposed that she should not be disturbed, and that they should both remain through the day and night. In answer to all objections about want of accommodation, she declared, that if there was not room for both to rest, she would watch, as she had done before. Any thing, she said, for the sake of their passing a day together once more.

This arranged, Mary told her father how she had enjoyed the preceding day and this morning.

“It is a fine morning, I see,” said he, looking

up to the high grated window which admitted—not sunshine—but such light as told that there was sunshine abroad.

“A fine, fragrant, summer morning,” said Mary, taking from her bosom some field-flowers which she had gathered in the meadows: “I have brought you these; I wish I could bring you the sunshine which painted them.”

As her father looked fondly at her, he thought within himself, that to him she had ever brought sunshine.

Anna awoke refreshed, and, to her sister's relief, appeared to have no objection to remain another day and night where she was. They spent the day in greater comfort and confidence than had been their wont of late, and at night slept and watched in turn; Anna managing to control her fears while her sister was beside her, though asleep.

To their astonishment, this proved the last day of Mr. Byerley's imprisonment. The strenuous exertions of his friends, the interference of the English ambassador, and especially, the important fact that there was no evidence against

him beyond the suspicions of a spy, availed to release him from his jail; but not altogether from injustice. He was ordered to quit Tours in twenty-four hours, and to embark immediately from the nearest port, whither he was to be escorted by two gens d'arme.

CHAPTER XII.

Sense with Sensibility.

It was not till Mr. Byerley had returned to his friend's house, and was placed in the midst of its quietness and comforts, that he became aware how his health and spirits had been shaken by the events of the last fortnight. He felt weary and feverish, and the excitement of his nerves was evident to every one near him. Mr. Fletcher was anxious that his departure should be delayed till he should be better able to bear the fatigue of travelling; but Mr. Byerley would not allow any mention of the subject to be made to M. Béranger, or to any of the authorities. He would ask no favour where he knew himself to be treated with injustice; and besides, he was impatient to leave a place where he had suffered

so much. Mary also advocated his departure, knowing that his health was always benefited by a voyage. She intended, of course, to accompany him. The most difficult question was, what should be done with Anna? There was no hope of her being of any use, and her presence was now agitating to her father. Her return would also preclude all hope of the benefit to be derived from change of scene and society, and would put an end at once to Madame Mesnil's influence over her. The Fletchers urged her remaining with them; declaring that the late events had disgusted them with their present abode, and that they should soon proceed to Paris, and in a few months afterwards, to England. It was determined that, if Anna would consent, she should be left behind, under the care of her kind friends, and attended by Susan.

The mere proposal of any plan was now certain to rouse Anna's opposition; but, though she wept over the hardship of being separated from her father, she was, in reality, glad to be relieved from the responsibilities of her filial duty, and to remain, for a time, near Madame

Mesnil. Saying, therefore, that she would submit if she could, and really mistaking her selfishness for resignation, she showed her filial affection by making her father miserable with her inexhaustible tears. Mary, mean while, having established her father on a sofa, was packing up, and settling all their little affairs, while Mr. Fletcher procured passports, and his wife made every provision for the comfort of the voyage which the shortness of the time allowed.

A letter arrived this day from Signor Elvi, who had heard with consternation of the arrest of his friend. His purpose in writing was to cheer the prisoner with hopes of release and of a return to his own free and happy country, whose institutions were praised as they deserved to be by one who had suffered so cruelly from the despotism which desolated his own land. Though Mr. Byerley was no longer a prisoner when this letter reached him, he was not the less in need of being cheered; and he was cheered, except by one passage, which it afflicted him to read, while he reproached himself for his selfish regret.

“ I have earnestly desired, my friend, to aid you ; I have mourned that I could not aid you, by hastening to fling wide your prison doors. There is but one way in which such exiles as I, stripped of all we possessed, can aid those who suffer injustice. It is by struggling for liberty, wherever a struggle can be maintained. Such assistance I am hastening to give. I cannot release the victims of tyranny from their chains, or recall the spirits of the martyrs to liberty ; but I can defend those principles by whose prevalence the captivity of the innocent shall, at length, cease, and the heads of the noble shall be crowned with honour instead of being rolled in the dust. I go to defend these principles in another land, in a distant continent of the globe. Should you set your foot in safety once more on your native strand, as I trust you will, I shall not be there to welcome you, as your friendly hand once welcomed me. It may be that you will hear of me no more, though I will not willingly relinquish the privilege of your correspondence. If you should hear of my fall, mourn not for me ; for you know that I look for better things beyond

the grave than rest for the weary, and a release from the troublings of the wicked : yes—for perfect love and perfect peace. What would our life below become without the love of the virtuous, and the peace which it instils ! So deeply am I conscious of this, that I cannot feel myself wholly unhappy while I bear with me the remembrance of your friendship and of the sympathy of your daughters. Confiding that it will be mine while I live, it is with mingled pleasure and regret that I dwell on the hours that I have spent with you and them ; and bid you all a present—it may be a long—farewell.”

“ He will fall, like hundreds of his companions, obscurely, and perhaps uselessly,” cried Mr. Byerley. “ Oh ! what an insatiable Moloch is war ! ”

“ So,” thought Mary, “ pass away the pleasures of this world. We shall see Elvi no more ; but, thank God ! we *have* known him, and may recognize him hereafter, when it may be our delight to sympathize more warmly in his joys than hitherto in his griefs.”

Towards evening, Mr. Byerley’s indisposition

appeared to increase, so that it was determined that he should not pass the night unwatched. As this was Anna's last opportunity of ministering to him, and as Mary had the fatigues of an anxious journey in prospect, it was agreed that Mr. Byerley should be given into Anna's charge. Mary retired to rest early, and her sister stationed herself with Susan in a dressing-room which opened on one side to her father's apartment, and on the other to the stairs. About midnight, her charge appeared, at length, to sleep quietly ; and when one and two o'clock struck, the watchers still heard, through the open door, that his breathing was that of deep repose. Anna was reading, or seeming to read, and her attendant at work ; and neither of them spoke or made the slightest noise. After a while, it seemed that Mr. Byerley was stirring ; and in a moment, before Anna could rise from her seat, he stood in the doorway, looking wildly about him, and making confused attempts to speak.

Anna fell back in her chair, and her shriek rang through the house. Susan scarcely knew which to attend to first, the nurse or the patient ;

but Mary was on the spot instantly to assist. Mr. Byerley had risen in his sleep, as his children knew he occasionally did when under nervous indisposition. Anna's shriek awoke him effectually, and shook him much more than his sudden appearance had disturbed her. Mary reproached herself with having left him, and sat by his bedside till Mrs. Fletcher came at six o'clock to insist on her taking a few hours' rest before her departure.

Mr. Fletcher, a more welcome companion than the two *gens d'arme*, accompanied the travellers to Rochelle, and having seen them safe on board, and out of the surveillance of the government, carried home better tidings of Mr. Byerley than were expected. He had appeared to breathe more freely, and to recover composure, as soon as they left the city of Tours behind them, and entered on the vine-covered hills and fertile plains which surround it; and had uttered an exclamation of delight at the first view of the blue expanse which was stretched before them as they descended to the coast. An English vessel was on the point of sailing when they arrived;

and from the first heights which their friend reached on his return, he could just discern its white sails disappearing on the far horizon. Mr. Fletcher, unused as he was to testify emotion of any kind, could scarcely restrain his indignation and grief that such a man as his friend should be thus thrust out of a country where he had committed no offence, and where none was charged upon him but that of associating with the choicest of her citizens. The ladies, however, merged their political in their private feelings.

“How did Mary look at the last?”

“Look! like what she is—a heroine.”

“Do you use that word in irony or in respect, papa?” said Rose, being sure of a gratifying answer, though he was not wont to speak respectfully of heroines.

“My dear, I speak in irony of would-be heroines—of women who are heroic when opportunity is wanting, and who, when opportunity comes, want heroism. But a real heroine, a woman who not being above small occasions is equal to the greatest, is the noblest spectacle that human life affords.

“ This from our father !” thought Rose and Selina, as they looked at each other with delight.

Meanwhile Mary was totally unconscious of the feelings she inspired, desiring nothing more than to love and be beloved. This desire she felt to be amply gratified, this golden evening, while her father continued to revive under her cherishing care. He was lying on deck, where she had persuaded him to repose himself on the couch she had spread. The melting sunlight bathed the receding shores of France, and rendered visible the spires of her towns and villages, and the verdure of the heights beyond. The breeze fanned the still feverish brow of the invalid, and the gentle motion of the vessel lulled him to a repose more refreshing than sleep.

“ Shall I sing to you, papa ?”

For the first time in her life, her father said “ No,” to her offer. She had sung to him last in prison, and he wished to banish all jail-associations till he should be stronger. He smiled while he confessed his reasons. They directed

Mary's conversation to widely different subjects. She told him of her wish to proceed immediately on their landing, to A——, which she knew he would prefer to remaining in town; and the images she called up of home and its quiet pleasures—of the study, and the farm, and their evening rambles—were delightful to her home-loving father, who went abroad unwillingly, and would gladly have vowed to seclude himself for the rest of his days, except on the occasion of public meetings.

“My only regret is for your disappointment, my love. When I interested myself first in politics, I made up my mind to all the inconveniences which might ensue, and therefore ought not to complain of what has happened. But it is hard upon you. You have shared all my fears and fatigues, and have had none of the pleasures I intended for you. No Paris, no Switzerland, no brilliant society:—it is a sad disappointment.”

“No, indeed, papa. I have not gained what I expected; but I have gained something much better—something,” she continued, smiling,

“ which it is your boast cannot be had in England.”

“ What good thing cannot be found in England, my dear ?”

“ I do not know that you will call it a good thing, though I have found it so ; I mean, the experience of such gross injustice as has been done to you. I have often wondered how we could endure—how we could preserve our composure—whether we could keep our charity entire, and our peace unbroken under grievous wrong.”

“ And what is the answer you have found ?”

“ Father ! I would not exchange the experience of the last fortnight, with all its suffering, all its humiliation, for the best advantages of Paris, and the divinest delights of Switzerland. Do not think me proud ; for, God knows, it has humbled me not a little to discover how feeble one may be in action, how cowardly in suffering, when one means the best ; but yet—what we have felt together and apart will make us happier as long as we live : will it not ? And could any thing at Paris have done more ?”

“ My child,” said her father, “ my *only* child !”

Mary saw that tears trickled through his fingers as his hand covered his eyes. She could not allow him to suppose that she assented to the expression which a moment of strong feeling had wrung from him. Hers was a soul to hope against hope, and she yet trusted that Anna’s restoration was probable. She had never flattered her sister, or striven to deceive herself ; but, clear-sighted as she was to the difficulties of the case, it was one of which she never despaired. She now reasoned with her father upon it, and ended by inspiring him with something of her own cheerful faith, and thus disposing him to join the names of his children in his thanksgivings as well as in his prayers.

When the evening star had risen high, Mary returned from receiving her father’s nightly blessing, to watch yet awhile for the influences which came to the wakeful spirit from the sky and from the deep. To such as she, these influences impart fervour without enthusiasm, and a confidence in which presumption has no part ;

and her steadfast soul looked abroad on the temporary agitations of human life, as calmly as her eye surveyed the rise and fall of the billowy expanse before her. If it be true that "to the pure all things are pure," it is equally true that to the peaceful all things breathe peace.

THE END.

1

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